THE MODERN READERS' SERIES
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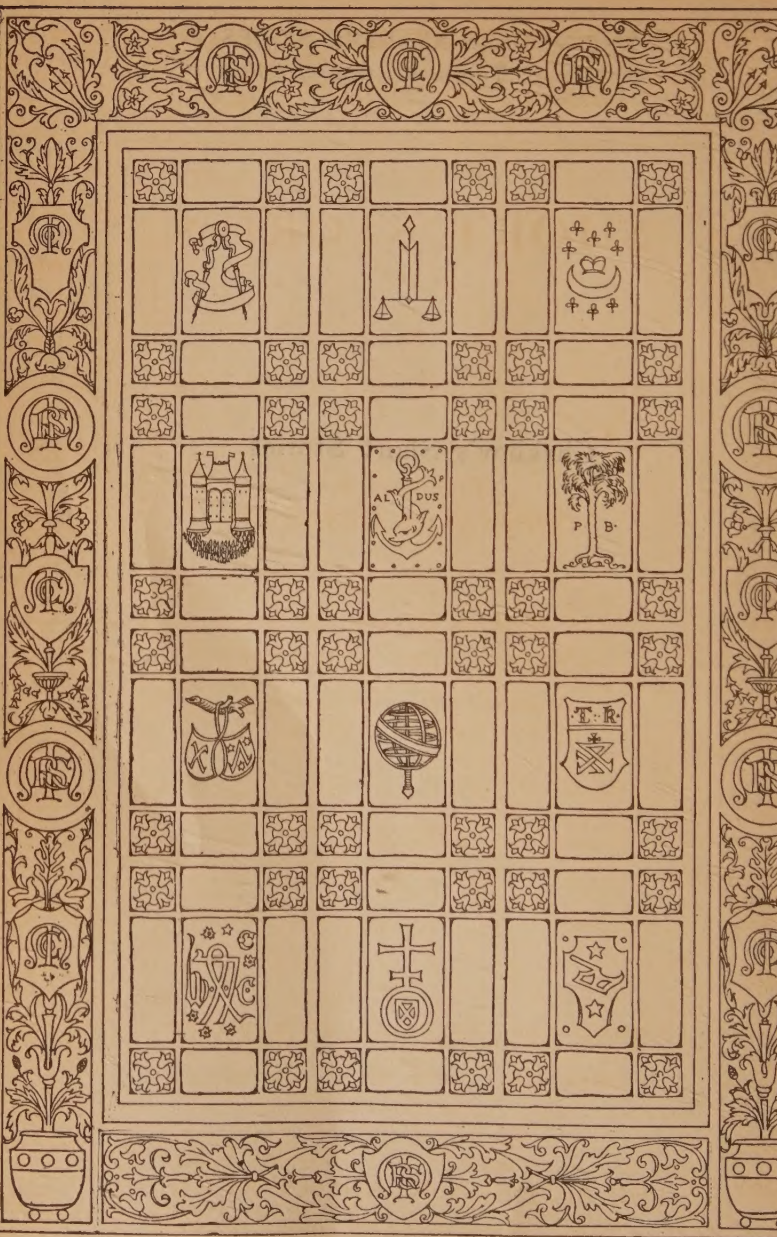
Chekhov's Short Stories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SHORT STORIES

By

ANTON PAVLOVITCH CHEKHOV

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INTRODUCTION

ANTON PAVLOVITCH CHEKHOV has been called by Tolstoi and other compatriots a Russian Maupassant. In points of technique he does resemble Maupassant and Daudet, both of whom he studied with admiration; but his ideas and his whole outlook on life are very different. Less striking than Gorky's, the stories of Chekhov seem more real and sincere, perhaps because their effects are quieter and more subtly achieved. His best work bears comparison with that of his friend and master Tolstoi, or that of Turgeniev, or of Dostoevsky.

Chekhov was born at Taganrog in 1860, the son of an emancipated serf of some culture and a refined and charitable mother from the merchant class. As the family lacked means, Chekhov began at the age of sixteen to earn his way. He was graduated at eighteen from the Taganrog high school, and joined his family next year in Moscow to pursue medical studies at the university. In the same year, 1879, he began professional writing, contributing brief tales and sketches to the newspapers of Petersburg and the weekly comic journals, sometimes using the pseudonym Chekhonte, and sometimes publishing anonymously. His medical studies at the University of Moscow were completed in 1884. As assistant to a physician at Zvenigorod, he was introduced to a circle of professional and literary men. For some years Chekhov continued his practice as physician or as medical officer, and even after he was well established as a writer he retained his interest in medicine, referring to it as his "lawful wife," and testifying to its value in training him for literature. In the epidemic of 1892 he served his district without remuneration by planning methods of cholera prevention. Among the many indications of Chekhov's public spirit are: his acting as taker of the cen-

sus; his work for famine relief; his long, hard trip to Sakhalin in 1890 to investigate the treatment of prisoners; and his founding of village schools and befriending of rural teachers, in whom he placed his hope for future enlightenment of the masses. Travel gave him a cosmopolitan attitude of mind, an ability to view his Russia objectively. And the physician's cool, keen observation, blended with a natural genius for diagnosis of ailments spiritual as well as physical, equipped him for his lifelong study of widely varied types of Russian character and the conditions of their daily living.

When his writings had brought him fame and financial comfort, Chekhov continued diligently at work in spite of a depressing lassitude due to ill health. His leisure hours he spent in gardening, or keeping open house for peasants, beggars, rogues, animal pets and little children, merchants, teachers, priests, artists, authors, and light-headed women of society—all visitors, in short, who could keep him in touch with that Russia which was his love and delight as it was also his grief and despair.

For at least fifteen years before his death in 1904, Chekhov suffered from tuberculosis—a fact that a reader of his stories would hardly guess unless he noticed the number of consumptives in them and the peculiar vividness in some sketches of the stages of the disease, as in "The Betrothed" and "Gusev." Knowing the fact, one inclines to attribute to the state of his health something of the despondency in his stories, as well as his extreme impressionability through the physical senses. His illness obliged him to give up third-class travel, which he had valued as a means of acquiring literary material; it forced him to spend some time at Yalta, in the Crimea; and at times it laid him up in a medical clinic; but it did not make him a whiner or a shirker. Charting his case in his notebook after a sixteen day stay in a clinic because of hemorrhage, he remarked that in the midst of it "L. N. Tolstoi came to see me. We spoke of immortality." The shy, reserved nature of Chekhov and his horror of extremely pathetic outpourings help explain the severe restraint in some of his accounts of others' griefs and

tragedies. He had to learn control because he was so keenly sensitive to the agonies of life. That lesson was a part of his physician's training; and it was also an element of his literary creed that one must write only when one has achieved calm. His letters concerning Gorky's work show clearly that he regarded an extremely emotional manner as a literary blunder.

The early tales and sketches as a group are as inferior to the more serious ones of Chekhov's maturity as are his light farces to such dramas as "Uncle Vanya," "The Sea-Gull," "The Cherry Orchard," and "The Three Sisters." The juvenile tales and sketches tend to witty satire, broad farce, and whimsical nonsense. Some are mere anecdotes or single incidents. Many have plots based on farcical situations, entanglements, or surprise. Some are frankly incredible, as "The Death of a Government Clerk" and "A Play," with their gay pretense at tragic endings. "In the Dark," "Boots," "Nerves," "At a Summer Villa," and "A Transgression" may stand for a whole class of early work presenting awkward and embarrassing complications of a broadly farcical nature. "Oh! the Public," "Overdoing It," and "A Work of Art" are somewhat pleasanter examples of Chekhov's humor of pushing a situation to an extreme. "The Cossacks," written in 1887, shows a struggle with a tale of impossible scope for a short-story, resulting in a ten-line summary, at the end, of what would furnish meat for a novelette. Some of the sketches are wavering and inconsequential, as "Too Early" and "A Country Cottage"; and "Small Fry" is literally a cockroach in Chekhov's house of fame. He was well aware that many of his early pieces were trash, as his letters show that it "displeased and bored" him to look over them and compare them with the great things "sitting in his head."

From the early period there survived in Chekhov a sense of the absurd, the farcical, the grotesque, which appears in small touches in the midst of pathetic or sombre scenes, as when Yakob (in "Rothschild's Fiddle") measures his wife when she is taken ill and sets to work on her coffin, or where the young hero in "Volodya," in tragic despair over love and life, is asked,

"You have the toothache, I suppose?" Satire was continued in the mature sketches of Chekhov, but it became more intellectual and more polished, as in "A Slander" and "A Story without a Title." Tales of animal and child life continued to show the light touch and playful spirit of his youth, as in the story of the little boy smoker, "At Home," and in "Who Was to Blame?" and "An Incident." Some will find more pleasing the humor of Chekhov's mildly amusing observations, such as "the huge clumsy goloshes only seen on the feet of practical and prudent persons of firm religious convictions" ("The Requiem"); his convincing pictures of laughable features and mannerisms of his characters; and the odd similes that now and then enliven his descriptions.

Chekhov's strongest short-stories excel in the creation of many varied types of character; in the absolute realization of their whole state of consciousness and their outlook upon life; in the rendering of poignant moments of love, grief, and pain; in the presentation of problems of conduct; in studies of the individual and his environment, and of relations between the social classes. Whereas the early work stressed incident and plot, the mature work is devoted to the vivid realization of the mental, emotional, and spiritual life of his characters.

It is so often asserted by critics that Chekhov does not express opinions in his stories, does not even side with or against his characters, and Chekhov himself comments so openly on his "objectivity," his "unconcern," his rule to "give people people and not yourself," that it is worth while to observe that, in giving us people, Chekhov has nevertheless managed to give a great deal of himself. He advised his brother, who was trying to learn to write short-stories: "Subjectivity is a terrible thing. It is bad in this alone, that it reveals the author's hands and feet." Now, Chekhov almost never gets squarely in front of his own camera. Not his hands and feet, but his thought and feeling appear, and these are in his best work so suffused through the story as to make the reader feel that his reactions are self-supplied. It is obvious, however, that Chekhov sometimes borrows characters to describe, to narrate, to expound,

and even to preach about people, institutions, and problems. They even deliver long harangues on his favorite topics, such as the means of uplift of the lower classes. In the main he endeavors to convey his criticisms of life indirectly by mere realistic portrayal. "Man will only become better," he confided to his notebook, "when you make him see what he is like."

Even when the manner of his character sketches seems most objective, they will be seen, on reflection and comparison, to reveal pronounced enthusiasms and distastes. Chekhov habitually reacts against the cheap, vulgar, and banal; against dirtiness, sordidness, and greed. He reads these shortcomings in the eyes, voices, outlines, and gestures of men; in their dress, their habits, their furnishings. Infinitely varied are the outward clues to the inner flaws. Tasteless and garish luxury of the wealthy (as in "A Doctor's Visit") is as offensive to him as the squalor of poverty. Stupidity, self-satisfaction, failure to progress are major offenses. He studied particularly all varieties of idlers, drifters, and futile dreamers. He portrays the handsome, healthy idler too well beloved of women in "Agafya"; the apostate Jew who scorns daily labor and sponges on the monks ("Uprooted"); the very cheerful constant borrower (Mihail, in "Ariadne"); the ne'er-do-well who gambles, forges, and abuses the trust of his soft-hearted uncle ("A Father"); the predatory woman who preys on man and loses her soul ("Ariadne"). None of these is condemned outright, but all are seen as faulty.

Equally deplorable in Chekhov's eyes are those who miss all the great things of life through preoccupation with routine details or too much attention to physical comforts. Under "Education" he enters in his notebook: " 'Masticate your food properly,' their father told them. And they masticated properly, and walked two hours every day, and washed in cold water, and yet they turned out unhappy and without talent." Liza, the heiress of the factories, in "A Doctor's Visit," has all that wealth can buy, but is sick and numb in mind and body because she has found no work for herself, and her wealth

has not purchased either culture or taste to lift the burden of her idleness. In "The Teacher of Literature," surfeit of physical comfort and pleasure brings the teacher loss of mental appetite and of ideals. Similarly, in "Ionitch" the physician's inner deterioration keeps steady pace with his material success, so that he pays for prosperity with the development of cruel, unreasonable whims, a harsh, imperious temper, and rolls of fat. Again, in "Gooseberries" the brother has the misfortune of becoming completely satisfied with the realization of the dream of his life in a country place of his own with gooseberry bushes. He gradually becomes so vegetable-minded as to turn into a veritable pig, all but the grunt.

"Russia," Chekhov remarked severely, "is a land of insatiable and lazy people; they eat enormously of nice things, drink, like to sleep in the daytime and snore in their sleep." Laziness and self-indulgence he regarded as main causes of stupidity and banality, of loss of ideals and of desire for progress. His gospel was of discontent with achievement and constant onward struggle even though the light ahead were dim or altogether missing. Gorky says, in his "Reminiscences of Chekhov":

"In front of that dreary gray crowd of helpless people there passed a great, wise, and observant man; he looked at all these dreary inhabitants of his country, and, with a sad smile, with a tone of gentle but deep reproach, with anguish in his face and heart, in a beautiful and sincere way, he said to them, 'You live badly, my friends. It is shameful to live like that.'"

There can be no doubt that in many of his stories Chekhov aimed to disturb the sleep of his countrymen—that he had the spirit of reform. But none was more impatient than he with the comfortable philanthropist, the ignorant and unsympathetic uplifter, the idle dreamer of long-distant betterment. "Gooseberries," "At Home," "The Princess," "Betrothed," and "A Nightmare" are among his studies of such reformers. Being of peasant descent, of democratic ideas, and himself acquainted with poverty, he continued to court the friendship of the poor and the lowly. The idea that wealth has its burdens and may become a curse is allegorized in "The Shoemaker and the

Devil," and directly presented in "A Doctor's Visit." But the distresses of the poor, the inequalities they suffer, and the unsympathetic institutional attitude toward the lower classes are frequent themes in his stories, as in "Rothschild's Fiddle," "On Official Duty," and "The Runaway." A favorite idea, also, is the mistakenness of charities uninspired by information, vision, or love. The would-be reformer in "A Nightmare," ignorant of local conditions and unable to see beneath unpromising exteriors, seriously misjudges Yakov, the uncouth priest who is doing more good than the supposedly cultured critic who wishes him removed. The gorged pig, the landowner in "Gooseberries," having decided that he should now concern himself with the salvation of his soul, ostentatiously doses the peasants with castor oil, soda, vodka, and other benefactions ignorantly bestowed. His satisfaction with his management of peasants is absolute. The same attitude appears in the pampered benefactor in "The Princess," whose supreme gift to the lower classes is a bright ray of sunshine,—the sight of herself. She meddles with their lives and makes herself a pest on all her visits—because she has no love for the poor and humble, but merely fancies herself in the rôle of their good angel. Auntie Dasha in "At Home" has no insight into the peasants' needs and does as much harm as good by her ministrations. "A Doctor's Visit" devotes a page and a half to the conditions of factory life: two thousand workmen toiling under one hundred unjust overseers for two or three owners unfitted by nature or circumstance to enjoy their profits. The owners take a false satisfaction in lectures, tea-rooms, and similar provisions for workers,—improvements which are not superfluous but "comparable with the treatment of incurable illnesses." The same theme is pursued for several pages in "An Artist's Story." Medicines, hospitals, schools, and libraries create new wants and force the peasants to work harder than ever. These millions of laborers who live worse than beasts in cold, hunger, terror, under their dreadful burden of toil, need, more than all these benefactions, the leisure to think, to invite their souls. This can come only when the higher classes cease to give or

sell them these "improvements" and put their own shoulders to the wheel. With these ideas in his stories the reader may compare Chekhov's authentic views of peasantry in "My Life."

Chekhov's dream of a new Russia was not merely of a new constitution—to which he hopefully looked forward—but of a practical reform of the work and the living conditions of the masses, and the spread of enlightened education through all classes of society. Some of Chekhov's ideas on education creep into his stories, but the subject is not always treated seriously. In an early story, "A Pink Stocking," a university man consoles himself for his wife's illiteracy by reflecting that a pink stocking is at least preferable to a blue, and that woman's shallowness is due to her vocation—"to love, to bear children, and to mix salad." Small points in educational theory are lightly treated in "Who Was to Blame?" and "At Home," with reference to training a kitten and a small boy. More seriously, "Ariadne" discusses the means of educating women away from the sole aim of "attracting and vanquishing men" by giving them an absolute equality from the start with no allowances and no favors. Tolstoi thought this to be Chekhov's own position, as we see from his criticism of "The Darling." Chekhov's great concern over education shows best in his letters and his life—in his founding and betterment of schools and his endeavors to enlist his friends in improving the nature and status of schoolmen. Teachers, he said, should be artists, in love with their calling; but in addition to ideals they must have books and must be lifted from poverty and degradation to a dignified standing in the community; for theirs is to be a large part in the building of a new Russia.

In spite of his usually objective manner, Chekhov so stresses character traits and types as to convey not only generally accepted truths about human nature, but his own criticisms of people, his ideals, and fragments of a philosophy of life. At times he casts objectivity aside and presents didactic truths outright. The varying degrees of indirectness and directness may be illustrated by comparing "Sorrow," "Rothschild's Fiddle,"

"In Exile," "The Head Gardener's Story," "A Slander," and "The Student."

Type sketches in Chekhov's tales often seem to reflect the author's personal distastes. Among them is the garrulous bore, whom we see in "The Petchenyeg" and "A Defenceless Creature" and "A Play." Pompous and egotistical persons strut ridiculously through his pages, so that his stories confirm his friends' statements that sincerity and simplicity were for him among the most valued human traits. One may infer also a contempt for those who would curtail their experience of life through fear, over-caution, or desire for immunity from suffering. "In Exile" and "The Man in a Case" illustrate this attitude. Many varieties of worthless women are portrayed by Chekhov with all understanding, but made definitely contemptible: Nyuta, who, with no spark of love in her, plays with Volodya's youthful passion and leads him to suicide ("Volodya"); the cheap wife in "The Grasshopper," who is attracted to inferior men and never really sees her great scientist husband until his death; the horrible romping Jewess in "Mire"; the predatory Ariadne, regarding man as her lawful prey ("Ariadne"); and any number of poodle-dog women who luxuriate in gratification of their senses, exchanging their birthright of thought and action for superfluous rest and a sort of fatty degeneration of their moral tissues.

But quite as conspicuous as these aversions from certain types are Chekhov's sympathy with the humble, the helpless, and the suffering, his kind understanding and forgiveness of the ignorant and sinning who are enemies of themselves rather than of society. Their ailments are frankly diagnosed, but in the manner of a kind family physician, as may be seen in various studies of beggars, drunkards, broken old men, frail and erring women. The drunken old beggar in "The Dependents," though a burden upon the community, has one remnant of human dignity in that his charity surpasses that of his grudging supporters. And Father Anastasy, in "The Letter," from the point of view of the priesthood is a degenerated sot, but even he has preserved a humanity of spirit which makes his advice more Christian than

that of the thoroughly respectable priest actuated by jealousy and anger. The lazy artist in "Art" is a burden to himself as well as to the people, but once a year they witness the triumph of Art through him when he carves his wonderful "Jordan" in ice, with the dove, the cross, the lectern religiously worked out in exquisite detail. Love for his daughter lights up the degradation of the drunken begging parent in "A Father"; and belated but sincere remorse for their misdirected lives turns Yakob in "Rothschild's Fiddle" and the drunkard in "Sorrow" into objects of kindly commiseration. The good uncle in "A Problem" is a bit soft in the head as well as the heart, but is still a better man than the harsh uncles who judge their nephew's character correctly. Pelagea, in "The Huntsman," and Katya, in "Talent," have bestowed their loves foolishly on men both undeserving and unresponsive, but one can no more refuse to sympathize with their unrewarded constancy than to feel with the cabman in "Misery," who, with no encouragement, tries to tell one passenger after another of his son's death, and at last, baffled by the heartless indifference of man, rises in the night to pour his sorrow into the ears of the one creature who will listen—his old mare. Chekhov was able to plunge beneath the unlovely outsides of his people and discover any hidden goodness. The sick-nerved heiress Liza in "A Doctor's Visit" is the essence of all that is ugly and unappealing until, through inner sorrow and the awakening of intellectual anxiety over her false position, a gleam of something better is dimly seen through the dull mask of her countenance. Still more surprising is the revelation of the charity, the vision, the self-sacrifice concealed by the uncouth exterior of the rural priest Yakov in "A Nightmare." Chekhov's sympathies show a much wider range than his aversions. Alexander Kuprin (in "Reminiscences of Chekhov") says, after recording Chekhov's interest in animals and little children: "Chekhov was regarded with a great and heartfelt love by all sorts of simple people with whom he came into contact—servants, messengers, porters, beggars, tramps, postmen." After his death, all sorts of people appeared claiming him as a "bosom friend."

The breadth and tolerance of his judgment, his charity toward forgivable weakness, his tenderness for the suffering are all in some danger of being overlooked because of a tendency of some critics to emphasize the objectivity and of others to stress the satirical bent of Chekhov's work. Even his friend and admirer, Tolstoi, in writing of "The Darling," compares Chekhov to Balaam in the Book of Numbers, where he tried to curse the Israelites but three times blessed them. "This is just what happened to the true poet and artist Chekhov when he wrote his charming story 'The Darling.' The author evidently means to mock at the pitiful creature—as he judges her with his intellect, but not with his heart—the Darling." Tolstoi goes on to point out the absurdity of the objects of the Darling's loves; but her soul, he says, "is not absurd, but marvelous and holy" ("The Darling," Macmillan, p. 25). According to Tolstoi, the Darling was Chekhov's bad example of what woman should not be, as contrasted with his ideal of the new woman developed to equality with man. "What makes the story so excellent," says Tolstoi, "is that the effect is unintentional." But this is a surprising judgment, in view of the fact that "The Darling" is, of all Chekhov's stories, one of the most deliberate and conscious artistry, with its carefully crystallized stages of action, with the alternate dwindling and blossoming of the nature of Olenka as love is withdrawn or freshly supplied her, with the clever climactic development to the supreme love of all bestowed upon the one who can and does offer least return; with the delicate insistence throughout that Olenka "was always fond of someone and could not exist without loving." This is the law of her being, and explains each rapid and absolute transfer of affection, as father, aunt, French master, theater owner, timber merchant, veterinary surgeon, and a borrowed little boy in turn usurp the centre of her consciousness. Utter self-abnegation and devotion to the object of her love are the flakes of gold in Olenka's alloy. There is a predetermined doubleness of impression—that one shall laugh at her with his mind and at the same moment smile from the heart. It is safe to conclude, from the whole tech-

nique of the story, that Chekhov had discovered the Darling before Tolstoi.

The Darling is, after all, only an exaggerated incarnation of a trait which Chekhov elsewhere pictures with all sympathy. One is constantly reminded in his stories that the exact nature of the object of a woman's love is of comparatively little importance, and that self-annihilation for love is a rather common tendency of woman. One of the characters in "On the Road" remarks, "A noble sublime slavery is the lot of woman." In "Ariadne" is argued the need of "poetizing" all love to make it tolerable. This is desirable even if it means assuming in the object of love all sorts of qualities that are not there; it is better so to poetize even if it results in "continual mistakes and miseries." The women attracted to Gurov in "The Lady with the Dog" loved in him "not himself but the man created by their imagination, whom they had been eagerly seeking all their lives, and afterwards, when they noticed their mistake, they loved him all the same." Hence the pathos of the ending of "Talent," where Katya yearningly idealizes her unresponsive lover and gladly gives him up to that fame which the reader knows he will never earn; and that of the sordid "Anyuta," where the artist's unlovely mistress, being told that he has given her up, hands him the four lumps of sugar she has earned for his tea and, weeping, turns to go; and that of "The Huntsman," where Pelagea, after twelve years' desertion, meets her husband by chance and stands staring after him, stunned with delightful pain, as he hesitatingly hands her a rouble and goes off to the other woman. Even the thought of a love that has never been becomes the centre of a woman's life in "The Trousseau," which clearly does not ridicule woman for being so exceedingly foolish about love.

All grades of love appear in Chekhov's stories, from the lowest to the finest. "Agafya" and "Ariadne" are fair examples of his studies of passion. "After the Theatre" shows a diffused, pervasive, joyful love of an adolescent, and "Volodya" a concentrated, painful, tragic one. "About Love" portrays the slow growth of illicit love with the wife of a kind and unsuspect-

ing friend and host. Chekhov has many triangle plots. He accepts as a matter of course the strange shifts of attitude between person and person in the course of a love affair, from repulsion to attraction, and back to nausea again. However illogical, these reversals seem to take place naturally in his stories, as senses, imagination, and emotion overwhelm reason in their ebb and flow. The author's practice in the drama doubtless helped him shift his people's moods both rapidly and convincingly.

But perhaps the most striking achievement of Chekhov in his character stories is his absolute realization of the whole stream of consciousness of individuals of widely differing types and ages: rovers, criminals, huntsmen, peasants, craftsmen, innkeepers, merchants, military and other officials, students, teachers, priests, monks, bishops, artists, writers, women of society; senile men and women, adolescents, and little children; even the lower animals. He seems to have practiced deliberately this thorough rendering of the inner life and point of view; for he enters into the daydreams of a two-months-old kitten in "Who Was to Blame?"; he shares the thoughts of a sheep in "Happiness," and of dogs in "Whitebrow" and "Kashtanka"; he tries a first walk outdoors in the person of a two-year-old baby in "Grisha," and goes to confession as a nine-year-old boy in "In Passion Week." He renders every phase of fleeting emotion in a variety of adolescent loves. His medical training and practice help account for the reality of the illnesses and deaths in his stories: the convalescence in "Typhus," the anticipations of death and the belated repentance in "Rothschild's Fiddle," the slow agonies of the consumptives in "Gusev," the teacher's dying spurt of energy in "The Schoolmaster," the mortal illness in "The Bishop" in which, while the body wastes, the mind attains a clearer vision so that the Bishop first sees all life face to face as he is about to leave it. It is the complete realization of all that goes on in the consciousness of the desperately sleepy little nursemaid Varka that makes the tragedy in "Sleepy" seem utterly inevitable.

Contrast between inner mood and outer circumstances is

also effectively presented, as in "Easter Eve," in which the sad yearning of the ferryman monk for his dead comrade, the gifted writer of hymns, is made more plaintive by the background of thoughtless merrymakers celebrating Easter as a noisy holiday. And in some of the stories the circumstances stand as a sort of fate which baffles and thwarts the expression of the characters' inner life. These few tales are among Chekhov's most depressing.

Chekhov once advised a writer to "avoid depicting the hero's state of mind." One ought, he said, to make it clear from the hero's actions. It is noteworthy, however, that Chekhov realized the exact difference between the possibilities of the play and those of the short-story in presenting character. He by no means confines himself to speech and action in his short-stories, but indulges in a bit of description and considerable exposition of states of mind, either as "omniscient narrator" or by speaking through other characters.

As one would expect of a skilled dramatist, Chekhov furnishes types in a large proportion of his characters in the short-story, but the degree of simplification varies greatly. An extreme example of singleness of impression with elaborate accumulation of contributory suggestions is "The Man in a Case," of a Greek master who encased himself in goloshes, umbrellas, and the classics against all the hazards of daily life —a creature of inhibitions and prohibitions, never at peace until he rests in the last case of all. Similar, but less hyperbolic, are the sketches of "a literary man all over" in "Excellent People"; of "A Peculiar Man," the very "near" person who hastily shops around for a midwife; and of "A Defenceless Creature," the hysterical woman who vanquishes every man in ear-shot and has her way quite wrongly; and the numerous talking bores. "A Problem" is really a family portrait of four types. More flexible than these set studies of types is the story with recurring emphasis upon a leading trait, as in "Rothschild's Fiddle," where Yakob is always calculating his losses and excusing his own incompetence—even after he has begun to see his faults.

Theoretically, Chekhov believed in putting description under. In a letter to a novelist who asked for criticism, Chekhov wrote: "In the first chapter you are busy describing people's faces—again that is the old way, it is a description which can be dispensed with. Five minutely described faces tire the attention and in the end lose their value. Clean-shaved characters are like each other, like Catholic priests, and remain alike, however studiously you describe them." Chekhov by no means dispenses with description, but his is in the modern manner. He seldom indulges in landscape description as such in a short-story; but he builds up the background by suggestion, as in "Easter Eve," "In Exile," and "Art." He gives considerably more space to outright description of people than to that of places; yet even here he is lavish only where it is essential to the story, as in contrasting the unpromising exterior of Father Yakov in "A Nightmare" with the inner man to be revealed.

The pictorial descriptions of people, which usually occur when they are first introduced, are often mere outline sketches, as, for example:

"Imagine a little shaven head with thick overhanging eyebrows, a beak of a nose, long gray mustaches, and a wide mouth with a long cherry-wood chibouk sticking out of it."—("The Beauties.")

"A tall thin English woman with prominent eyes like a crab's, and a big bird-like nose more like a hook than a nose.—("A Daughter of Albion.")

Small details are not scorned if they are significant or aid in conveying an image. One who has seen Manetchka blush, in "The Trousseau," needs not be told that she will never have a lover:

"Her long nose, which was slightly pitted with smallpox, turned red first, and then the flush passed up to her eyes and her forehead."

Chekhov sets a high value on the specific. He does not say, "he snored," but " 'Khee-poo-ah,' he snored—'Khee-poo-ah.' " He even condescends to note in a critical moment the buzzing

of a fly on a pane, or the meandering of one across a human face (as in "An Inquiry").

According to Alexander Kuprin (in his "Reminiscences of Chekhov"), Chekhov advised young writers to gather material direct from life by ordinary observation, and by third-class travel to extend the range; to choose ordinary, everyday themes; and to trust to memory and imagination rather than to notebooks. "The big things will remain, and the details you can always invent or find." But he kept notebooks himself. One, translated by S. S. Koteliansky and Leonard Woolf, was published by B. W. Huebsch in 1921. His widow preserved another containing themes definitely intended for future work, passages already employed being struck out. Kuprin quotes Chekhov as saying, "One should not put down similes, characteristic traits, details, scenes from nature—this must come of itself when it is needed. But a rare fact, a rare name, a technical term, should be put down in the notebook—otherwise it may be forgotten and lost." But the published notebook is what its title suggests—"Themes, thoughts, notes, and fragments," and it contains some of the very items warned against. There are titles for plays, odd names, such as the tiny schoolboy's name, Trachtenbauer; mannerisms such as the apologetic "Excuse me," like the brother's in "Ariadne"; the banalities of the commonplace man Z (p. 48); a character's tastes shown by his reading (pp. 83, 133, 141), or by his talk (p. 56), or by his room (p. 133). Small details of appearance are also noted, as for example:

"When Y spoke or ate, his beard moved as if he had no teeth in his mouth."

"A man who when he fails opens his eyes wide."

"A lady looking like a fish standing on its head; her mouth like a slit, one longs to put a penny in it."

Notes for type sketches are frequent: a character "always lying without rhyme or reason" (p. 77); a woman who imagines herself and her son utterly unlike everyone else (p. 47); a sparkling, joyous man, always over-rated because he is cheerful, though he never does anything worth while (p. 91); a

hypochondriac (p. 43). Sudden moods and outbursts are recorded, as on p. 55, and, on p. 62, the long peaceful thoughts following the sensation of not being in love. Dramatic moments of high tension appear, as when a buried love is renewed (p. 42). And there are contrasts noted between men's position and their real circumstances, as of the councillor of state who was poor and had a job at the theatre barking like a dog (p. 112); contrasts between the inner and the outer man—the high official gone astray (p. 98); clashes between the inner desires of man and his misfit occupations (pp. 19-20); and strange contrasts of character types fettered together in the human family (p. 69). A few lines serve to sketch adequate story situations, as, on p. 76, of the husband who suffers all his life over his wife's writings, or (p. 95) of the squire who could not help quarreling with his neighbors but could not live without them. A number of the plots are such as Chekhov used in juvenile work—of errors and entanglements—merely ingenious. The inspiration for "The Man in a Case" appears on page 1, that for "Whitebrow" on p. 135, fragments of the play "The Three Sisters" on pages 142-43, and a theme analogous to that of "Slander" on page 99. The notebook in possession of Chekhov's widow, however, is said to be much richer in materials actually employed.

In the working up of such varied bits of life, Chekhov tries almost every variety of fiction except the full-scope novel. He has tales too long and too complex for the short-story, which are usually divided into chapters; character sketches too slight or too expository for the short-story; incidents too small, simple, or insignificant; and hundreds of specimens of the typical modern short-story, highly unified and impressionistic. There is a tendency to conceive the longer narratives in definitely marked stages of incident or situation. As with Coppée, Maupassant, and other French writers of short-stories, these divisions may or may not be visible to the reader's eye. "The Grasshopper," "The Murder," "Ionitch," "The Bishop," "Gusev," and "The Lady with the Dog" illustrate the short-story of moderate length (twenty to forty-eight pages) divided

into from four to eight sections clearly indicated. Without such indication, "The Trousseau" is just as definitely conceived in three scenes, and "The Darling" in four steps seemingly downward, but in the end seen to be upward to a final perfect love. Accompanying division of stories into stages appears at times the dramatic device of parallelism of incident and manner, as in the Darling's numerous blossomings to love, and in the two impending deaths in "Rothschild's Fiddle." It is a little surprising that such marked artifice does not destroy the impression of reality.

In his later life Chekhov kept his stories by him sometimes for years, copying and changing, scarring even final proofs with his corrections. He trusted little to the criticisms of others, feeling that he was frequently misunderstood; but he constantly revised, regarding daily writing and some rewriting as the only way to improve. He expressed the opinion that story writers might well remove their beginnings and endings after composing them. His own beginnings impress one as being less worked over than the endings. Often he sketches one or more main characters rapidly at the start. He does not balk at a summarizing narration of preconditions of a story, as in "The Lady with the Dog," which gives two pages to preliminaries. Apparently he wished to give frankly and at once anything necessary to perfect understanding of a character's point of view. Clarity is one of his great virtues. We may be left wondering as to the solution of a problem, but never as to what the problem is or how it arose. Almost every sort of ending may be found: an unexpected turn, as in "The Beggar" and many youthful pieces; a normal close with the main incident as climax, as in "Sleepy" and "Volodya"; a frank statement of the fundamental idea, even an abstract truth; a hint at a possible solution to a problem, as in "A Doctor's Visit"; and a mere stop with no solution in sight, as in "Agafya," "A Problem," "Terror," "The Lady with the Dog," and many others.

Kuprin, in his "Reminiscences" (p. 79), quotes Chekhov as attributing to Maupassant an almost universal improvement in technique of composition, and as taking to himself the credit for

reforming the editor's attitude toward the short story. "Editors used to say, 'What? You call this a work? But this is shorter than a sparrow's nose. No, we do not want such trifles.' But see, I got round them and paved the way for others." And in his notebook Chekhov quotes from Daudet: " 'Why are thy songs so short?' a bird was once asked. 'Is it because thou art short of breath?' 'I have very many songs and I should like to sing them all.' " It is undoubtedly to the brevity of Chekhov's more typical short-stories that we owe much of their unity of effect. The enforcing of a single truth or abstract idea also tends to the same result. The subordination to one main character and the reduction of number of traits give at times a rigid unity, especially in the type studies. But the unity of impression in his best short-stories is such that we might guess the fact that he tried, whenever possible, to write the first draft at a single sitting, and, if he left a story for a long time, he had to begin it again. Unifying by mood or tone is perhaps his best achievement, as it permits more flexibility. "The Trousseau," "Sleepy," "In Exile," "Misery," "Sorrow," "The Dependents," "Gusev," "Rothschild's Fiddle," and "Easter Eve" are excellent studies in harmony of mood and tone. Several of them show small variations of mood playing over an essential unity of tone and feeling.

There will perhaps always be differences of opinion as to Chekhov's attitude toward life and human nature. He has been called unfeeling, fatalistic, and even worse. "Utter idiot!" he exclaimed, according to his friend Bunin, on reading a critic's remark that he was "indifferent to questions of morality and society and that he was a pessimist." Perhaps he himself insisted too much on his objectivity. Apathy is certainly the last thing of which a thoughtful reader should accuse him. His conviction that the whole of life may be fit material for literature results in the production of some sordid pieces, as "Drunk," "Bad Weather," "The Doctor," "Mire," "A Gentleman Friend," and "Anyuta." Many of his stories are grim, as "Peasant Wives," "On the Road," "Gusev," and "Sleepy." Still more have a note of dejection or of despair, as "Neigh-

bours," "At Home," "Terror," "The Kiss," "A Nightmare." Situations are left unsolved, as in "Betrothed," "At Home," "The Princess," "Rothschild's Fiddle," "Sorrow," and "On the Road." As in life, certain painful conditions seem destined to go on and the end is not in sight. But to call him a fatalist in his general position is a mistake; for his gospel, like his practice, is of work, of unceasing individual effort to improve one's self and one's surroundings, even though the immediate outlook may seem dreary beyond hope. Most of Chekhov's best short-stories are in quiet or dark coloring, but the effect is still neither dull nor drab, for never was even monotony itself more varyingly presented than in his tales. The delicate shading of moods even in his greyest sketches redeems their dreariness. But it is, after all, his own sincerity and simplicity, and the fine sympathy with which he views his fellow man that entitle Chekhov to a permanent place in the history of fiction.

Evelyn May Albright.

NOTE

In the latest Russian edition there appeared four hundred and thirty short stories, tales, and sketches by Chekhov. Of these the author had republished two hundred and forty. All but forty of these chosen works and thirteen other juvenile pieces were translated by Mrs. Constance Garnett and published by the Macmillan Company (1916-1923). From these admirable translations of Mrs. Garnett have been chosen, with permission, the thirty-two short stories in this volume. The aim has been, to illustrate the range of Chekhov's best work in the short-story, without representation of his long sketches, such as "The Steppe," or his long tales approaching the novelette, such as "The Duel." Because of their comparative inferiority, most of the lighter short stories have been omitted. The reader interested in Chekhov's juvenile work will find eleven specimens in the thirteenth volume of Mrs. Garnett's translations ("Love").

The statements of fact as to Chekhov's life and habits are chiefly drawn from these works: Letters of Anton Chekhov to His Family and Friends, Translated by Constance Garnett, 1920; Life and Letters of Anton Chekhov, Edited by Koteliansky and Tomlinson, Doran, 1925; The Note-Book of Anton Chekhov, Translated by Koteliansky and Woolf, Huebsch, 1921; Reminiscences of Anton Chekhov, by Maxim Gorky, Alexander Kuprin, and I. A. Bunin, Translated by Koteliansky and Woolf, Huebsch, 1921. As others than the stories in this volume are mentioned in the sketch of Chekhov's work in the short-story, a list is appended at the end of the volume which will enable the reader to locate over two hundred stories contained in the thirteen volumes translated by Constance Garnett and published by the Macmillan Company.

Evelyn May Albright.

Chekhov's Short Stories

THE DARLING

OLENKA, the daughter of the retired collegiate assessor, Plemyanniakov, was sitting in her back porch, lost in thought. It was hot, the flies were persistent and teasing, and it was pleasant to reflect that it would soon be evening. Dark rain-clouds were gathering from the east, and bringing from time to time a breath of moisture in the air.

Kukin, who was the manager of an open-air theatre called the Tivoli, and who lived in the lodge, was standing in the middle of the garden looking at the sky.

"Again!" he observed despairingly. "It's going to rain again! Rain every day, as though to spite me. I might as well hang myself! It's ruin! Fearful losses every day."

He flung up his hands, and went on, addressing Olenka:

"There! that's the life we lead, Olga Semyonovna. It's enough to make one cry. One works and does one's utmost; one wears oneself out, getting no sleep at night, and racks one's brain what to do for the best. And then what happens? To begin with, one's public is ignorant, boorish. I give them the very best operetta, a dainty masque, first rate music-hall artists. But do you suppose that's what they want? They don't understand anything of that sort. They want a clown; what they ask for is vulgarity. And then look at the weather! Almost every evening it rains. It started on the tenth of May, and it's kept it up all May and June. It's simply awful! The public doesn't come, but I've to pay the rent just the same, and pay the artists."

The next evening the clouds would gather again, and Kukin would say with an hysterical laugh:

"Well, rain away, then! Flood the garden, drown me! Damn my luck in this world and the next! Let the artists

have me up! Send me to prison!—to Siberia!—the scaffold! Ha, ha, ha!"

And next day the same thing.

Olenka listened to Kukin with silent gravity, and sometimes tears came into her eyes. In the end his misfortunes touched her; she grew to love him. He was a small thin man, with a yellow face, and curls combed forward on his forehead. He spoke in a thin tenor; as he talked his mouth worked on one side, and there was always an expression of despair on his face; yet he aroused a deep and genuine affection in her. She was always fond of some one, and could not exist without loving. In earlier days she had loved her papa, who now sat in a darkened room, breathing with difficulty; she had loved her aunt who used to come every other year from Bryansk; and before that, when she was at school, she had loved her French master. She was a gentle, soft-hearted, compassionate girl, with mild, tender eyes and very good health. At the sight of her full rosy cheeks, her soft white neck with a little dark mole on it, and the kind, naïve smile, which came into her face when she listened to anything pleasant, men thought, "Yes, not half bad," and smiled too, while lady visitors could not refrain from seizing her hand in the middle of a conversation, exclaiming in a gush of delight, "You darling!"

The house in which she had lived from her birth upwards, and which was left her in her father's will, was at the extreme end of the town, not far from the Tivoli. In the evenings and at night she could hear the band playing, and the crackling and banging of fireworks, and it seemed to her that it was Kukin struggling with his destiny, storming the entrenchments of his chief foe, the indifferent public; there was a sweet thrill at her heart, she had no desire to sleep, and when he returned home at daybreak, she tapped softly at her bedroom window, and showing him only her face and one shoulder through the curtain, she gave him a friendly smile. . . .

He proposed to her, and they were married. And when he had a closer view of her neck and her plump, fine shoulders, he threw up his hands, and said:

"You darling!"

He was happy, but as it rained on the day and night of his wedding, his face still retained an expression of despair.

They got on very well together. She used to sit in his office, to look after things in the Tivoli, to put down the accounts and pay the wages. And her rosy cheeks, her sweet, naïve, radiant smile, were to be seen now at the office window, now in the refreshment bar or behind the scenes of the theatre. And already she used to say to her acquaintances that the theatre was the chief and most important thing in life, and that it was only through the drama that one could derive true enjoyment and become cultivated and humane.

"But do you suppose the public understands that?" she used to say. "What they want is a clown. Yesterday we gave 'Faust Inside Out,' and almost all the boxes were empty; but if Vanitchka and I had been producing some vulgar thing, I assure you the theatre would have been packed. To-morrow Vanitchka and I are doing 'Orpheus in Hell.' Do come."

And what Kukin said about the theatre and the actors she repeated. Like him she despised the public for their ignorance and their indifference to art; she took part in the rehearsals, she corrected the actors, she kept an eye on the behaviour of the musicians, and when there was an unfavourable notice in the local paper, she shed tears, and then went to the editor's office to set things right.

The actors were fond of her and used to call her "Vanitchka and I," and "the darling"; she was sorry for them and used to lend them small sums of money, and if they deceived her, she used to shed a few tears in private, but did not complain to her husband.

They got on well in the winter too. They took the theatre in the town for the whole winter, and let it for short terms to a Little Russian company, or to a conjurer, or to a local dramatic society. Olenka grew stouter, and was always beaming with satisfaction, while Kukin grew thinner and yellower, and continually complained of their terrible losses, although he had not done badly all the winter. He used to cough at

night, and she used to give him hot raspberry tea or lime-flower water, to rub him with eau-de-Cologne and to wrap him in her warm shawls.

"You're such a sweet pet!" she used to say with perfect sincerity, stroking his hair. "You're such a pretty dear!"

Towards Lent he went to Moscow to collect a new troupe, and without him she could not sleep, but sat all night at her window, looking at the stars, and she compared herself with the hens, who are awake all night and uneasy when the cock is not in the hen-house. Kukin was detained in Moscow, and wrote that he would be back at Easter, adding some instructions about the Tivoli. But on the Sunday before Easter, late in the evening, came a sudden ominous knock at the gate; some one was hammering on the gate as though on a barrel—boom, boom, boom! The drowsy cook went flopping with her bare feet through the puddles, as she ran to open the gate.

"Please open," said some one outside in a thick bass. "There is a telegram for you."

Olenka had received telegrams from her husband before, but this time for some reason she felt numb with terror. With shaking hands she opened the telegram and read as follows:

"Ivan Petrovitch died suddenly to-day. Awaiting immate instructions fufuneral Tuesday."

That was how it was written in the telegram—"fufuneral," and the utterly incomprehensible word "immate." It was signed by the stage manager of the operatic company.

"My darling!" sobbed Olenka. "Vanitchka, my precious, my darling! Why did I ever meet you! Why did I know you and love you! Your poor heart-broken Olenka is all alone without you!"

Kukin's funeral took place on Tuesday in Moscow, Olenka returned home on Wednesday, and as soon as she got indoors she threw herself on her bed and sobbed so loudly that it could be heard next door, and in the street.

"Poor darling!" the neighbours said, as they crossed themselves. "Olga Semyonovna, poor darling! How she does take on!"

Three months later Olenka was coming home from mass, melancholy and in deep mourning. It happened that one of her neighbours, Vassily Andreitch Pustovalov, returning home from church, walked back beside her. He was the manager at Babakayev's, the timber merchant's. He wore a straw hat, a white waistcoat, and a gold watch-chain, and looked more like a country gentleman than a man in trade.

"Everything happens as it is ordained, Olga Semyonovna," he said gravely, with a sympathetic note in his voice; "and if any of our dear ones die, it must be because it is the will of God, so we ought to have fortitude and bear it submissively."

After seeing Olenka to her gate, he said good-bye and went on. All day afterwards she heard his sedately dignified voice, and whenever she shut her eyes she saw his dark beard. She liked him very much. And apparently she had made an impression on him too, for not long afterwards an elderly lady, with whom she was only slightly acquainted, came to drink coffee with her, and as soon as she was seated at table began to talk about Pustovalov, saying that he was an excellent man whom one could thoroughly depend upon, and that any girl would be glad to marry him. Three days later Pustovalov came himself. He did not stay long, only about ten minutes, and he did not say much, but when he left, Olenka loved him —loved him so much that she lay awake all night in a perfect fever, and in the morning she sent for the elderly lady. The match was quickly arranged, and then came the wedding.

Pustovalov and Olenka got on very well together when they were married.

Usually he sat in the office till dinner-time, then he went out on business, while Olenka took his place, and sat in the office till evening, making up accounts and booking orders.

"Timber gets dearer every year; the price rises twenty per cent," she would say to her customers and friends. "Only fancy we used to sell local timber, and now Vassitchka always has to go for wood to the Mogilev district. And the freight!" she would add, covering her cheeks with her hands in horror. "The freight!"

It seemed to her that she had been in the timber trade for ages and ages, and that the most important and necessary thing in life was timber; and there was something intimate and touching to her in the very sound of words such as "baulk," "post," "beam," "pole," "scantling," "batten," "lath," "plank," etc.

At night when she was asleep she dreamed of perfect mountains of planks and boards, and long strings of wagons, carting timber somewhere far away. She dreamed that a whole regiment of six-inch beams forty feet high, standing on end, was marching upon the timber-yard; that logs, beams, and boards knocked together with the resounding crash of dry wood, kept falling and getting up again, piling themselves on each other. Olenka cried out in her sleep, and Pustovalov said to her tenderly: "Olenka, what's the matter, darling? Cross yourself!"

Her husband's ideas were hers. If he thought the room was too hot, or that business was slack, she thought the same. Her husband did not care for entertainments, and on holidays he stayed at home. She did likewise.

"You are always at home or in the office," her friends said to her. "You should go to the theatre, darling, or to the circus."

"Vassitchka and I have no time to go to theatres," she would answer sedately. "We have no time for nonsense. What's the use of these theatres?"

On Saturdays Pustovalov and she used to go to the evening service; on holidays to early mass, and they walked side by side with softened faces as they came home from church. There was a pleasant fragrance about them both, and her silk dress rustled agreeably. At home they drank tea, with fancy bread and jams of various kinds, and afterwards they ate pie. Every day at twelve o'clock there was a savoury smell of beetroot soup and of mutton or duck in their yard, and on fast-days of fish, and no one could pass the gate without feeling hungry. In the office the samovar was always boiling, and customers were regaled with tea and cracknels. Once a week the couple went to the baths and returned side by side, both red in the face.

"Yes, we have nothing to complain of, thank God," Olenka used to say to her acquaintances. "I wish every one were as well off as Vassitchka and I."

When Pustovalov went away to buy wood in the Mogilev district, she missed him dreadfully, lay awake and cried. A young veterinary surgeon in the army, called Smirnin, to whom they had let their lodge, used sometimes to come in in the evening. He used to talk to her and play cards with her, and this entertained her in her husband's absence. She was particularly interested in what he told her of his home life. He was married and had a little boy, but was separated from his wife because she had been unfaithful to him, and now he hated her and used to send her forty roubles a month for the maintenance of their son. And hearing of all this, Olenka sighed and shook her head. She was sorry for him.

"Well, God keep you," she used to say to him at parting, as she lighted him down the stairs with a candle. "Thank you for coming to cheer me up, and may the Mother of God give you health."

And she always expressed herself with the same sedateness and dignity, the same reasonableness, in imitation of her husband. As the veterinary surgeon was disappearing behind the door below, she would say:

"You know, Vladimir Platonitch, you'd better make it up with your wife. You should forgive her for the sake of your son. You may be sure the little fellow understands."

And when Pustovalov came back, she told him in a low voice about the veterinary surgeon and his unhappy home life, and both sighed and shook their heads and talked about the boy, who, no doubt, missed his father, and by some strange connection of ideas, they went up to the holy ikons, bowed to the ground before them and prayed that God would give them children.

And so the Pustovalovs lived for six years quietly and peaceably in love and complete harmony.

But behold! one winter day after drinking hot tea in the office, Vassily Andreitch went out into the yard without his

cap on to see about sending off some timber, caught cold and was taken ill. He had the best doctors, but he grew worse and died after four months' illness. And Olenka was a widow once more.

"I've nobody, now you've left me, my darling," she sobbed, after her husband's funeral. "How can I live without you, in wretchedness and misery! Pity me, good people, all alone in the world!"

She went about dressed in black with long "weepers," and gave up wearing hat and gloves for good. She hardly ever went out, except to church, or to her husband's grave, and led the life of a nun. It was not till six months later that she took off the weepers and opened the shutters of the windows. She was sometimes seen in the mornings, going with her cook to market for provisions, but what went on in her house and how she lived now could only be surmised. People guessed, from seeing her drinking tea in her garden with the veterinary surgeon, who read the newspaper aloud to her, and from the fact that, meeting a lady she knew at the post-office, she said to her:

"There is no proper veterinary inspection in our town, and that's the cause of all sorts of epidemics. One is always hearing of people's getting infection from the milk supply, or catching diseases from horses and cows. The health of domestic animals ought to be as well cared for as the health of human beings."

She repeated the veterinary surgeon's words, and was of the same opinion as he about everything. It was evident that she could not live a year without some attachment, and had found new happiness in the lodge. In any one else this would have been censured, but no one could think ill of Olenka; everything she did was so natural. Neither she nor the veterinary surgeon said anything to other people of the change in their relations, and tried, indeed, to conceal it, but without success, for Olenka could not keep a secret. When he had visitors, men serving in his regiment, and she poured out tea or served the supper, she would begin talking of the cattle

plague, of the foot and mouth disease, and of the municipal slaughter-houses. He was dreadfully embarrassed, and when the guests had gone, he would seize her by the hand and hiss angrily:

"I've asked you before not to talk about what you don't understand. When we veterinary surgeons are talking among ourselves, please don't put your word in. It's really annoying."

And she would look at him with astonishment and dismay, and ask him in alarm: "But, Voloditchka, what *am* I to talk about?"

And with tears in her eyes she would embrace him, begging him not to be angry, and they were both happy.

But this happiness did not last long. The veterinary surgeon departed, departed for ever with his regiment, when it was transferred to a distant place—to Siberia, it may be. And Olenka was left alone.

Now she was absolutely alone. Her father had long been dead, and his armchair lay in the attic, covered with dust and lame of one leg. She got thinner and plainer, and when people met her in the street they did not look at her as they used to, and did not smile to her; evidently her best years were over and left behind, and now a new sort of life had begun for her, which did not bear thinking about. In the evening Olenka sat in the porch, and heard the band playing and the fireworks popping in the Tivoli, but now the sound stirred no response. She looked into her yard without interest, thought of nothing, wished for nothing, and afterwards, when night came on she went to bed and dreamed of her empty yard. She ate and drank as it were unwillingly.

And what was worst of all, she had no opinions of any sort. She saw the objects about her and understood what she saw, but could not form any opinion about them, and did not know what to talk about. And how awful it is not to have any opinions! One sees a bottle, for instance, or the rain, or a peasant driving in his cart, but what the bottle is for, or the rain, or the peasant, and what is the meaning of it, one can't

say, and could not even for a thousand roubles. When she had Kukin, or Pustovalov, or the veterinary surgeon, Olenka could explain everything, and give her opinion about anything you like, but now there was the same emptiness in her brain and in her heart as there was in her yard outside. And it was as harsh and as bitter as wormwood in the mouth.

Little by little the town grew in all directions. The road became a street, and where the Tivoli and the timber-yard had been, there were new turnings and houses. How rapidly time passes! Olenka's house grew dingy, the roof got rusty, the shed sank on one side, and the whole yard was overgrown with docks and stinging-nettles. Olenka herself had grown plain and elderly; in summer she sat in the porch, and her soul, as before, was empty and dreary and full of bitterness. In winter she sat at her window and looked at the snow. When she caught the scent of spring, or heard the chime of the church bells, a sudden rush of memories from the past came over her, there was a tender ache in her heart, and her eyes brimmed over with tears; but this was only for a minute, and then came emptiness again and the sense of the futility of life. The black kitten, Briska, rubbed against her and purred softly, but Olenka was not touched by these feline caresses. That was not what she needed. She wanted a love that would absorb her whole being, her whole soul and reason—that would give her ideas and an object in life, and would warm her old blood. And she would shake the kitten off her skirt and say with vexation:

"Get along; I don't want you!"

And so it was, day after day and year after year, and no joy, and no opinions. Whatever Mavra, the cook, said she accepted.

One hot July day, towards evening, just as the cattle were being driven away, and the whole yard was full of dust, some one suddenly knocked at the gate. Olenka went to open it herself and was dumbfounded when she looked out: she saw Smirnin, the veterinary surgeon, grey-headed, and dressed as a civilian. She suddenly remembered everything. She could not

help crying and letting her head fall on his breast without uttering a word, and in the violence of her feeling she did not notice how they both walked into the house and sat down to tea.

"My dear Vladimir Platonitch! What fate has brought you?" she muttered, trembling with joy.

"I want to settle here for good, Olga Semyonovna," he told her. "I have resigned my post, and have come to settle down and try my luck on my own account. Besides, it's time for my boy to go to school. He's a big boy. I am reconciled with my wife, you know."

"Where is she?" asked Olenka.

"She's at the hotel with the boy, and I'm looking for lodgings."

"Good gracious, my dear soul! Lodgings? Why not have my house? Why shouldn't that suit you? Why, my goodness, I wouldn't take any rent!" cried Olenka in a flutter, beginning to cry again. "You live here, and the lodge will do nicely for me. Oh dear! how glad I am!"

Next day the roof was painted and the walls were whitewashed, and Olenka, with her arms akimbo, walked about the yard giving directions. Her face was beaming with her old smile, and she was brisk and alert as though she had waked from a long sleep. The veterinary's wife arrived—a thin, plain lady, with short hair and a peevish expression. With her was her little Sasha, a boy of ten, small for his age, blue-eyed, chubby, with dimples in his cheeks. And scarcely had the boy walked into the yard when he ran after the cat, and at once there was the sound of his gay, joyous laugh.

"Is that your puss, auntie?" he asked Olenka. "When she has little ones, do give us a kitten. Mamma is awfully afraid of mice."

Olenka talked to him, and gave him tea. Her heart warmed and there was a sweet ache in her bosom, as though the boy had been her own child. And when he sat at the table in the evening, going over his lessons, she looked at him with deep tenderness and pity as she murmured to herself:

"You pretty pet! . . . my precious! . . . Such a fair little thing, and so clever."

" 'An island is a piece of land which is entirely surrounded by water,' " he read aloud.

"An island is a piece of land," she repeated, and this was the first opinion to which she gave utterance with positive conviction after so many years of silence and dearth of ideas.

Now she had opinions of her own, and at supper she talked to Sasha's parents, saying how difficult the lessons were at the high schools, but that yet the high school was better than a commercial one, since with a high-school education all careers were open to one, such as being a doctor or an engineer.

Sasha began going to the high school. His mother departed to Harkov to her sister's and did not return; his father used to go off every day to inspect cattle, and would often be away from home for three days together, and it seemed to Olenka as though Sasha was entirely abandoned, that he was not wanted at home, that he was being starved, and she carried him off to her lodge and gave him a little room there.

And for six months Sasha had lived in the lodge with her. Every morning Olenka came into his bedroom and found him fast asleep, sleeping noiselessly with his hand under his cheek. She was sorry to wake him.

"Sashenka," she would say mournfully, "get up, darling. It's time for school."

He would get up, dress and say his prayers, and then sit down to breakfast, drink three glasses of tea, and eat two large cracknels and half a buttered roll. All this time he was hardly awake and a little ill-humoured in consequence.

"You don't quite know your fable, Sashenka," Olenka would say, looking at him as though he were about to set off on a long journey. "What a lot of trouble I have with you! You must work and do your best, darling, and obey your teachers."

"Oh, do leave me alone!" Sasha would say.

Then he would go down the street to school, a little figure, wearing a big cap and carrying a satchel on his shoulder. Olenka would follow him noiselessly.

"Sashenka!" she would call after him, and she would pop into his hand a date or a caramel. When he reached the street where the school was, he would feel ashamed of being followed by a tall, stout woman; he would turn round and say:

"You'd better go home, auntie. I can go the rest of the way alone."

She would stand still and look after him fixedly till he had disappeared at the school-gate.

Ah, how she loved him! Of her former attachments not one had been so deep; never had her soul surrendered to any feeling so spontaneously, so disinterestedly, and so joyously as now that her maternal instincts were aroused. For this little boy with the dimple in his cheek and the big school cap, she would have given her whole life, she would have given it with joy and tears of tenderness. Why? Who can tell why?

When she had seen the last of Sasha, she returned home, contented and serene, brimming over with love; her face, which had grown younger during the last six months, smiled and beamed; people meeting her looked at her with pleasure.

"Good-morning, Olga Semyonovna, darling. How are you, darling?"

"The lessons at the high school are very difficult now," she would relate at the market. "It's too much; in the first class yesterday they gave him a fable to learn by heart, and a Latin translation and a problem. You know it's too much for a little chap."

And she would begin talking about the teachers, the lessons, and the school books, saying just what Sasha said.

At three o'clock they had dinner together: in the evening they learned their lessons together and cried. When she put him to bed, she would stay a long time making the Cross over him and murmuring a prayer; then she would go to bed and dream of that far-away misty future when Sasha would finish his studies and become a doctor or an engineer, would have a big house of his own with horses and a carriage, would get married and have children. . . . She would fall asleep still thinking of the same thing, and tears would run down her

cheeks from her closed eyes, while the black cat lay purring beside her: "Mrr, mrr, mrr."

Suddenly there would come a loud knock at the gate.

Olenka would wake up breathless with alarm, her heart throbbing. Half a minute later would come another knock.

"It must be a telegram from Harkov," she would think, beginning to tremble from head to foot. "Sasha's mother is sending for him from Harkov. . . . Oh, mercy on us!"

She was in despair. Her head, her hands, and her feet would turn chill, and she would feel that she was the most unhappy woman in the world. But another minute would pass, voices would be heard: it would turn out to be the veterinary surgeon coming home from the club.

"Well, thank God!" she would think.

And gradually the load in her heart would pass off, and she would feel at ease. She would go back to bed thinking of Sasha, who lay sound asleep in the next room, sometimes crying out in his sleep:

"I'll give it you! Get away! Shut up!"

THE BISHOP

I

THE evening service was being celebrated on the eve of Palm Sunday in the Old Petrovsky Convent. When they began distributing the palm it was close upon ten o'clock, the candles were burning dimly, the wicks wanted snuffing; it was all in a sort of mist. In the twilight of the church the crowd seemed heaving like the sea, and to Bishop Pyotr, who had been unwell for the last three days, it seemed that all the faces—old and young, men's and women's—were alike, that everyone who came up for the palm had the same expression in his eyes. In the mist he could not see the doors; the crowd kept moving and looked as though there were no end to it. The female choir was singing, a nun was reading the prayers for the day.

How stifling, how hot it was! How long the service went on! Bishop Pyotr was tired. His breathing was laboured and rapid, his throat was parched, his shoulders ached with weariness, his legs were trembling. And it disturbed him unpleasantly when a religious maniac uttered occasional shrieks in the gallery. And then all of a sudden, as though in a dream or delirium, it seemed to the bishop as though his own mother Marya Timofyevna, whom he had not seen for nine years, or some old woman just like his mother, came up to him out of the crowd, and, after taking a palm branch from him, walked away looking at him all the while good-humouredly with a kind, joyful smile until she was lost in the crowd. And for some reason tears flowed down his face. There was peace in his heart, everything was well, yet he kept gazing fixedly towards the left choir, where the prayers were being read, where in the dusk of evening you could not recognize anyone, and—wept. Tears glistened on his face and on his beard.

Here someone close at hand was weeping, then someone else farther away, then others and still others, and little by little the church was filled with soft weeping. And a little later, within five minutes, the nuns' choir was singing; no one was weeping and everything was as before.

Soon the service was over. When the bishop got into his carriage to drive home, the gay, melodious chime of the heavy, costly bells was filling the whole garden in the moonlight. The white walls, the white crosses on the tombs, the white birch-trees and black shadows, and the far-away moon in the sky exactly over the convent, seemed now living their own life, apart and incomprehensible, yet very near to man. It was the beginning of April, and after the warm spring day it turned cool; there was a faint touch of frost, and the breath of spring could be felt in the soft, chilly air. The road from the convent to the town was sandy, the horses had to go at a walking pace, and on both sides of the carriage in the brilliant, peaceful moonlight there were people trudging along home from church through the sand. And all was silent, sunk in thought; everything around seemed kindly, youthful, akin, everything—trees and sky and even the moon, and one longed to think that so it would be always.

At last the carriage drove into the town and rumbled along the principal street. The shops were already shut, but at Erakin's, the millionaire shopkeeper's, they were trying the new electric lights, which flickered brightly, and a crowd of people were gathered round. Then came wide, dark, deserted streets, one after another; then the highroad, the open country, the fragrance of pines. And suddenly there rose up before the bishop's eyes a white turreted wall, and behind it a tall belfry in the full moonlight, and beside it five shining, golden cupolas: this was the Pankratievsky Monastery, in which Bishop Pyotr lived. And here, too, high above the monastery, was the silent, dreamy moon. The carriage drove in at the gate, crunching over the sand; here and there in the moonlight there were glimpses of dark monastic figures, and there was the sound of footsteps on the flag-stones. . . .

"You know, your holiness, your mamma arrived while you were away," the lay brother informed the bishop as he went into his cell.

"My mother? When did she come?"

"Before the evening service. She asked first where you were and then she went to the convent."

"Then it was her I saw in the church, just now! Oh, Lord!"

And the bishop laughed with joy.

"She bade me tell your holiness," the lay brother went on, "that she would come to-morrow. She had a little girl with her—her grandchild, I suppose. They are staying at Ovsyannikov's inn."

"What time is it now?"

"A little after eleven."

"Oh, how vexing!"

The bishop sat for a little while in the parlour, hesitating, and as it were refusing to believe it was so late. His arms and legs were stiff, his head ached. He was hot and uncomfortable. After resting a little he went into his bedroom, and there, too, he sat a little, still thinking of his mother; he could hear the lay brother going away, and Father Sisoy coughing the other side of the wall. The monastery clock struck a quarter.

The bishop changed his clothes and began reading the prayers before sleep. He read attentively those old, long familiar prayers, and at the same time thought about his mother. She had nine children and about forty grandchildren. At one time, she had lived with her husband, the deacon, in a poor village; she had lived there a very long time from the age of seventeen to sixty. The bishop remembered her from early childhood, almost from the age of three, and—how he had loved her! Sweet, precious childhood, always fondly remembered! Why did it, that long-past time that could never return, why did it seem brighter, fuller, and more festive than it had really been? When in his childhood or youth he had been ill, how tender and sympathetic his mother had been! And now his

prayers mingled with the memories, which gleamed more and more brightly like a flame, and the prayers did not hinder his thinking of his mother.

When he had finished his prayers he undressed and lay down, and at once, as soon as it was dark, there rose before his mind his dead father, his mother, his native village Lesopolye . . . the creak of wheels, the bleat of sheep, the church bells on bright summer mornings, the gypsies under the window —oh, how sweet to think of it! He remembered the priest of Lesopolye, Father Simeon—mild, gentle, kindly; he was a lean little man, while his son, a divinity student, was a huge fellow and talked in a roaring bass voice. The priest's son had flown into a rage with the cook and abused her: "Ah, you Jehud's ass!" and Father Simeon overhearing it, said not a word, and was only ashamed because he could not remember where such an ass was mentioned in the Bible. After him the priest at Lesopolye had been Father Demyan, who used to drink heavily, and at times drank till he saw green snakes, and was even nicknamed Demyan Snakeseer. The schoolmaster at Lesopolye was Matvey Nikolaitch, who had been a divinity student, a kind and intelligent man, but he, too, was a drunkard; he never beat the schoolchildren, but for some reason he always had hanging on his wall a bunch of birch-twigs, and below it an utterly meaningless inscription in Latin: "Betula kinder-balsamica secuta." He had a shaggy black dog whom he called Syntax.

And his holiness laughed. Six miles from Lesopolye was the village Obnino with a wonder-working ikon. In the summer they used to carry the ikon in procession about the neighbouring villages and ring the bells the whole day long; first in one village and then in another, and it used to seem to the bishop then that joy was quivering in the air, and he (in those days his name was Pavlusha) used to follow the ikon, bareheaded and barefoot, with naïve faith, with a naïve smile, infinitely happy. In Obnino, he remembered now, there were always a lot of people, and the priest there, Father Alexey, to save time during mass, used to make his deaf nephew Ilarion read the names

of those for whose health or whose souls' peace prayers were asked. Ilarion used to read them, now and then getting a five or ten kopeck piece for the service, and only when he was grey and bald, when life was nearly over, he suddenly saw written on one of the pieces of paper: "What a fool you are, Ilarion." Up to fifteen at least Pavlusha was undeveloped and idle at his lessons, so much so that they thought of taking him away from the clerical school and putting him into a shop; one day, going to the post at Obnino for letters, he had stared a long time at the post-office clerks and asked: "Allow me to ask, how do you get your salary, every month or every day?"

His holiness crossed himself and turned over on the other side, trying to stop thinking and go to sleep.

"My mother has come," he remembered and laughed.

The moon peeped in at the window, the floor was lighted up, and there were shadows on it. A cricket was chirping. Through the wall Father Sisoy was snoring in the next room, and his aged snore had a sound that suggested loneliness, forlornness, even vagrancy. Sisoy had once been housekeeper to the bishop of the diocese, and was called now "the former Father Housekeeper"; he was seventy years old, he lived in a monastery twelve miles from the town and stayed sometimes in the town, too. He had come to the Pankratievsky Monastery three days before, and the bishop had kept him that he might talk to him at his leisure about matters of business, about the arrangements here. . . .

At half-past one they began ringing for matins. Father Sisoy could be heard coughing, muttering something in a discontented voice, then he got up and walked barefoot about the rooms.

"Father Sisoy," the bishop called.

Sisoy went back to his room and a little later made his appearance in his boots, with a candle; he had on his cassock over his underclothes and on his head was an old faded skullcap.

"I can't sleep," said the bishop, sitting up. "I must be unwell. And what it is I don't know. Fever!"

"You must have caught cold, your holiness. You must be rubbed with tallow." Sisoy stood a little and yawned. "O Lord, forgive me, a sinner."

"They had the electric lights on at Erakin's to-day," he said; "I don't like it!"

Father Sisoy was old, lean, bent, always dissatisfied with something, and his eyes were angry-looking and prominent as a crab's.

"I don't like it," he said, going away. "I don't like it. Bother it!"

II

Next day, Palm Sunday, the bishop took the service in the cathedral in the town, then he visited the bishop of the diocese, then visited a very sick old lady, the widow of a general, and at last drove home. Between one and two o'clock he had welcome visitors dining with him—his mother and his niece Katya, a child of eight years old. All dinner-time the spring sunshine was streaming in at the windows, throwing bright light on the white tablecloth and on Katya's red hair. Through the double windows they could hear the noise of the rooks and the notes of the starlings in the garden.

"It is nine years since we have met," said the old lady. "And when I looked at you in the monastery yesterday, good Lord! you've not changed a bit, except maybe you are thinner and your beard is a little longer. Holy Mother, Queen of Heaven! Yesterday at the evening service no one could help crying. I, too, as I looked at you, suddenly began crying, though I couldn't say why. His Holy Will!"

And in spite of the affectionate tone in which she said this, he could see she was constrained as though she were uncertain whether to address him formally or familiarly, to laugh or not, and that she felt herself more a deacon's widow than his mother. And Katya gazed without blinking at her uncle, his holiness, as though trying to discover what sort of a person he was. Her hair sprang up from under the comb and the velvet ribbon and stood out like a halo: she had a turned-up

nose and sly eyes. The child had broken a glass before sitting down to dinner, and now her grandmother, as she talked, moved away from Katya first a wineglass and then a tumbler. The bishop listened to his mother and remembered how many, many years ago she used to take him and his brothers and sisters to relations whom she considered rich; in those days she was taken up with the care of her children, now with her grandchildren, and she had brought Katya. . . .

"Your sister, Varenka, has four children," she told him; "Katya, here, is the eldest. And your brother-in-law Father Ivan fell sick, God knows of what, and died three days before the Assumption; and my poor Varenka is left a beggar."

"And how is Nikanor getting on?" the bishop asked about his eldest brother.

"He is all right, thank God. Though he has nothing much, yet he can live. Only there is one thing: his son, my grandson Nikolasha, did not want to go into the Church; he has gone to the university to be a doctor. He thinks it is better; but who knows! His Holy Will!"

"Nikolasha cuts up dead people," said Katya, spilling water over her knees.

"Sit still, child," her grandmother observed calmly, and took the glass out of her hand. "Say a prayer, and go on eating."

"How long it is since we have seen each other!" said the bishop, and he tenderly stroked his mother's hand and shoulder; "and I missed you abroad, mother, I missed you dreadfully."

"Thank you."

"I used to sit in the evenings at the open window, lonely and alone; often there was music playing, and all at once I used to be overcome with homesickness and felt as though I would give everything only to be at home and see you."

His mother smiled, beamed, but at once she made a grave face and said:

"Thank you."

His mood suddenly changed. He looked at his mother and could not understand how she had come by that respectfulness, that timid expression of face: what was it for? And he did

not recognize her. He felt sad and vexed. And then his head ached just as it had the day before; his legs felt fearfully tired, and the fish seemed to him stale and tasteless; he felt thirsty all the time. . . .

After dinner two rich ladies, landowners, arrived and sat for an hour and a half in silence with rigid countenances; the archimandrite, a silent, rather deaf man, came to see him about business. Then they began ringing for vespers; the sun was setting behind the wood and the day was over. When he returned from church, he hurriedly said his prayers, got into bed, and wrapped himself up as warm as possible.

It was disagreeable to remember the fish he had eaten at dinner. The moonlight worried him, and then he heard talking. In an adjoining room, probably in the parlour, Father Sisoy was talking politics:

"There's war among the Japanese now. They are fighting. The Japanese, my good soul, are the same as the Montenegrins; they are the same race. They were under the Turkish yoke together."

And then he heard the voice of Marya Timofyevna:

"So, having said our prayers and drunk tea, we went, you know, to Father Yegor at Novokatnoye, so . . ."

And she kept on saying, "having had tea" or "having drunk tea," and it seemed as though the only thing she had done in her life was to drink tea.

The bishop slowly, languidly, recalled the seminary, the academy. For three years he had been Greek teacher in the seminary: by that time he could not read without spectacles. Then he had become a monk; he had been made a school inspector. Then he had defended his thesis for his degree. When he was thirty-two he had been made rector of the seminary, and consecrated archimandrite: and then his life had been so easy, so pleasant; it seemed so long, so long, no end was in sight. Then he had begun to be ill, had grown very thin and almost blind, and by the advice of the doctors had to give up everything and go abroad.

"And what then?" asked Sisoy in the next room.

"Then we drank tea . . ." answered Marya Timofyevna.

"Good gracious, you've got a green beard," said Katya suddenly in surprise, and she laughed.

The bishop remembered that the grey-headed Father Sisoy's beard really had a shade of green in it, and he laughed.

"God have mercy upon us, what we have to put up with with this girl!" said Sisoy, aloud, getting angry. "Spoilt child! Sit quiet!"

The bishop remembered the perfectly new white church in which he had conducted the services while living abroad, he remembered the sound of the warm sea. In his flat he had five lofty light rooms; in his study he had a new writing-table, lots of books. He had read a great deal and often written. And he remembered how he had pined for his native land, how a blind beggar woman had played the guitar under his window every day and sung of love, and how, as he listened, he had always for some reason thought of the past. But eight years had passed and he had been called back to Russia, and now he was a suffragan bishop, and all the past had retreated far away into the mist as though it were a dream. . . .

Father Sisoy came into the bedroom with a candle.

"I say!" he said, wondering, "are you asleep already, your holiness?"

"What is it?"

"Why, it's still early, ten o'clock or less. I bought a candle to-day; I wanted to rub you with tallow."

"I am in a fever . . ." said the bishop, and he sat up. "I really ought to have something. My head is bad. . . ."

Sisoy took off the bishop's shirt and began rubbing his chest and back with tallow.

"That's the way . . . that's the way . . ." he said. "Lord Jesus Christ . . . that's the way. I walked to the town to-day; I was at what's-his-name's—the chief priest Sidonsky's. . . . I had tea with him. I don't like him. Lord Jesus Christ. . . . That's the way. I don't like him."

III

The bishop of the diocese, a very fat old man, was ill with rheumatism or gout, and had been in bed for over a month. Bishop Pyotr went to see him almost every day, and saw all who came to ask his help. And now that he was unwell he was struck by the emptiness, the triviality of everything which they asked and for which they wept; he was vexed at their ignorance, their timidity; and all this useless, petty business oppressed him by the mass of it, and it seemed to him that now he understood the diocesan bishop, who had once in his young days written on "The Doctrines of the Freedom of the Will," and now seemed to be all lost in trivialities, to have forgotten everything, and to have no thoughts of religion. The bishop must have lost touch with Russian life while he was abroad; he did not find it easy; the peasants seemed to him coarse, the women who sought his help dull and stupid, the seminarists and their teachers uncultivated and at times savage. And the documents coming in and going out were reckoned by tens of thousands; and what documents they were! The higher clergy in the whole diocese gave the priests, young and old, and even their wives and children, marks for their behaviour—a five, a four, and sometimes even a three; and about this he had to talk and to read and write serious reports. And there was positively not one minute to spare; his soul was troubled all day long, and the bishop was only at peace when he was in church.

He could not get used, either, to the awe which, through no wish of his own, he inspired in people in spite of his quiet, modest disposition. All the people in the province seemed to him little, scared, and guilty when he looked at them. Everyone was timid in his presence, even the old chief priests; everyone "flopped" at his feet, and not long previously an old lady, a village priest's wife who had come to consult him, was so overcome by awe that she could not utter a single word, and went empty away. And he, who could never in his sermons bring himself to speak ill of people, never reproached anyone because

he was so sorry for them, was moved to fury with the people who came to consult him, lost his temper and flung their petitions on the floor. The whole time he had been here, not one person had spoken to him genuinely, simply, as to a human being; even his old mother seemed now not the same! And why, he wondered, did she chatter away to Sisoy and laugh so much; while with him, her son, she was grave and usually silent and constrained, which did not suit her at all. The only person who behaved freely with him and said what he meant was old Sisoy, who had spent his whole life in the presence of bishops and had outlived eleven of them. And so the bishop was at ease with him, although, of course, he was a tedious and nonsensical man.

After the service on Tuesday, his holiness Pyotr was in the diocesan bishop's house receiving petitions there; he got excited and angry, and then drove home. He was as unwell as before; he longed to be in bed, but he had hardly reached home when he was informed that a young merchant called Erakin, who subscribed liberally to charities; had come to see him about a very important matter. The bishop had to see him. Erakin stayed about an hour, talked very loud, almost shouted, and it was difficult to understand what he said.

"God grant it may," he said as he went away. "Most essential! According to circumstances, your holiness! I trust it may!"

After him came the Mother Superior from a distant convent. And when she had gone they began ringing for vespers. He had to go to church.

In the evening the monks sang harmoniously, with inspiration. A young priest with a black beard conducted the service; and the bishop, hearing of the Bridegroom who comes at midnight and of the Heavenly Mansion adorned for the festival, felt no repentance for his sins, no tribulation, but peace at heart and tranquillity. And he was carried back in thought to the distant past, to his childhood and youth, when, too, they used to sing of the Bridegroom and of the Heavenly Mansion; and now that past rose up before him—living, fair, and joyful

as in all likelihood it never had been. And perhaps in the other world, in the life to come, we shall think of the distant past, of our life here, with the same feeling. Who knows? The bishop was sitting near the altar. It was dark; tears flowed down his face. He thought that here he had attained everything a man in his position could attain; he had faith and yet everything was not clear, something was lacking still. He did not want to die; and he still felt that he had missed what was most important, something of which he had dimly dreamed in the past; and he was troubled by the same hopes for the future as he had felt in childhood, at the academy and abroad.

"How well they sing to-day!" he thought, listening to the singing. "How nice it is!"

IV

On Thursday he celebrated mass in the cathedral; it was the Washing of Feet. When the service was over and the people were going home, it was sunny, warm; the water gurgled in the gutters, and the unceasing trilling of the larks, tender, telling of peace, rose from the fields outside the town. The trees were already awakening and smiling a welcome, while above them the infinite, fathomless blue sky stretched into the distance, God knows whither.

On reaching home his holiness drank some tea, then changed his clothes, lay down on his bed, and told the lay brother to close the shutters on the windows. The bedroom was darkened. But what weariness, what pain in his legs and his back, a chill heavy pain, what a noise in his ears! He had not slept for a long time—for a very long time, as it seemed to him now, and some trifling detail which haunted his brain as soon as his eyes were closed prevented him from sleeping. As on the day before, sounds reached him from the adjoining rooms through the walls, voices, the jingle of glasses and teaspoons. . . . Marya Timofyevna was gaily telling Father Sisoy some story with quaint turns of speech, while the latter answered in a grumpy, ill-humoured voice: "Bother them! Not likely!

What next!" And the bishop again felt vexed and then hurt that with other people his old mother behaved in a simple, ordinary way, while with him, her son, she was shy, spoke little, and did not say what she meant, and even, as he fancied, had during all those three days kept trying in his presence to find an excuse for standing up, because she was embarrassed at sitting before him. And his father? He, too, probably, if he had been living, would not have been able to utter a word in the bishop's presence. . . .

Something fell down on the floor in the adjoining room and was broken; Katya must have dropped a cup or a saucer, for Father Sisoy suddenly spat and said angrily:

"What a regular nuisance the child is! Lord forgive my transgressions! One can't provide enough for her."

Then all was quiet, the only sounds came from outside. And when the bishop opened his eyes he saw Katya in his room, standing motionless, staring at him. Her red hair, as usual, stood up from under the comb like a halo.

"Is that you, Katya?" he asked. "Who is it downstairs who keeps opening and shutting a door?"

"I don't hear it," answered Katya; and she listened.

"There, someone has just passed by."

"But that was a noise in your stomach, uncle."

He laughed and stroked her on the head.

"So you say Cousin Nikolasha cuts up dead people?" he asked after a pause.

"Yes, he is studying."

"And is he kind?"

"Oh, yes, he's kind. But he drinks vodka awfully."

"And what was it your father died of?"

"Papa was weak and very, very thin, and all at once his throat was bad. I was ill then, too, and brother Fedya; we all had bad throats. Papa died, uncle, and we got well."

Her chin began quivering, and tears gleamed in her eyes and trickled down her cheeks.

"Your holiness," she said in a shrill voice, by now weeping bitterly, "uncle, mother and all of us are left very wretched.

. . . Give us a little money . . . do be kind . . . uncle darling. . . ."

He, too, was moved to tears, and for a long time was too much touched to speak. Then he stroked her on the head, patted her on the shoulder and said:

"Very good, very good, my child. When the holy Easter comes, we will talk it over. . . . I will help you. . . . I will help you. . . ."

His mother came in quietly, timidly, and prayed before the ikon. Noticing that he was not sleeping, she said:

"Won't you have a drop of soup?"

"No, thank you," he answered, "I am not hungry."

"You seem to be unwell, now I look at you. I should think so; you may well be ill! The whole day on your legs, the whole day. . . . And, my goodness, it makes one's heart ache even to look at you! Well, Easter is not far off; you will rest then, please God. Then we will have a talk, too, but now I'm not going to disturb you with my chatter. Come along, Katya; let his holiness sleep a little."

And he remembered how once very long ago, when he was a boy, she had spoken exactly like that, in the same jestingly respectful tone, with a Church dignitary. . . . Only from her extraordinarily kind eyes and the timid, anxious glance she stole at him as she went out of the room could one have guessed that this was his mother. He shut his eyes and seemed to sleep, but twice heard the clock strike and Father Sisoy coughing the other side of the wall. And once more his mother came in and looked timidly at him for a minute. Someone drove up to the steps, as he could hear, in a coach or in a chaise. Suddenly a knock, the door slammed, the lay brother came into the bedroom.

"Your holiness," he called.

"Well?"

"The horses are here; it's time for the evening service."

"What o'clock is it?"

"A quarter past seven."

He dressed and drove to the cathedral. During all the

"Twelve Gospels" he had to stand in the middle of the church without moving, and the first gospel, the longest and the most beautiful, he read himself. A mood of confidence and courage came over him. That first gospel, "Now is the Son of Man glorified," he knew by heart; and as he read he raised his eyes from time to time, and saw on both sides a perfect sea of lights and heard the splutter of candles, but, as in past years, he could not see the people, and it seemed as though these were all the same people as had been round him in those days, in his childhood and his youth; that they would always be the same every year and till such time as God only knew.

His father had been a deacon, his grandfather a priest, his great-grandfather a deacon, and his whole family, perhaps from the days when Christianity had been accepted in Russia, had belonged to the priesthood; and his love for the Church services, for the priesthood, for the peal of the bells, was deep in him, ineradicable, innate. In church, particularly when he took part in the service, he felt vigorous, of good cheer, happy. So it was now. Only when the eighth gospel had been read, he felt that his voice had grown weak, even his cough was inaudible. His head had begun to ache intensely, and he was troubled by a fear that he might fall down. And his legs were indeed quite numb, so that by degrees he ceased to feel them and could not understand how or on what he was standing, and why he did not fall. . . .

It was a quarter to twelve when the service was over. When he reached home, the bishop undressed and went to bed at once without even saying his prayers. He could not speak and felt that he could not have stood up. When he had covered his head with the quilt he felt a sudden longing to be abroad, an insufferable longing! He felt that he would give his life not to see those pitiful cheap shutters, those low ceilings, not to smell that heavy monastery smell. If only there were one person to whom he could have talked, have opened his heart!

For a long while he heard footsteps in the next room and could not tell whose they were. At last the door opened, and Sisoy came in with a candle and a tea-cup in his hand.

"You are in bed already, your holiness?" he asked. "Here I have come to rub you with spirit and vinegar. A thorough rubbing does a great deal of good. Lord Jesus Christ! . . . That's the way . . . that's the way. . . . I've just been in our monastery. . . . I don't like it. I'm going away from here to-morrow, your holiness; I don't want to stay longer. Lord Jesus Christ. . . . That's the way. . . ."

Sisoy could never stay long in the same place, and he felt as though he had been a whole year in the Pankratievsky Monastery. Above all, listening to him it was difficult to understand where his home was, whether he cared for anyone or anything, whether he believed in God. . . . He did not know himself why he was a monk, and, indeed, he did not think about it, and the time when he had become a monk had long passed out of his memory; it seemed as though he had been born a monk.

"I'm going away to-morrow; God be with them all."

"I should like to talk to you. . . . I can't find the time," said the bishop softly with an effort. "I don't know anything or anybody here. . . ."

"I'll stay till Sunday if you like; so be it, but I don't want to stay longer. I am sick of them!"

"I ought not to be a bishop," said the bishop softly. "I ought to have been a village priest, a deacon . . . or simply a monk. . . . All this oppresses me . . . oppresses me."

"What? Lord Jesus Christ. . . . That's the way. Come, sleep well, your holiness! . . . What's the good of talking? It's no use. Good-night!"

The bishop did not sleep all night. And at eight o'clock in the morning he began to have hæmorrhage from the bowels. The lay brother was alarmed, and ran first to the archimandrite, then for the monastery doctor, Ivan Andreyitch, who lived in the town. The doctor, a stout old man with a long grey beard, made a prolonged examination of the bishop, and kept shaking his head and frowning, then said:

"Do you know, your holiness, you have got typhoid?"

After an hour or so of hæmorrhage the bishop looked

much thinner, paler, and wasted; his face looked wrinkled, his eyes looked bigger, and he seemed older, shorter, and it seemed to him that he was thinner, weaker, more insignificant than anyone, that everything that had been had retreated far, far away and would never go on again or be repeated.

"How good," he thought, "how good!"

His old mother came. Seeing his wrinkled face and his big eyes, she was frightened, she fell on her knees by the bed and began kissing his face, his shoulders, his hands. And to her, too, it seemed that he was thinner, weaker, and more insignificant than anyone, and now she forgot that he was a bishop, and kissed him as though he were a child very near and very dear to her.

"Pavlusha, darling," she said; "my own, my darling son! . . . Why are you like this? Pavlusha, answer me!"

Katya, pale and severe, stood beside her, unable to understand what was the matter with her uncle, why there was such a look of suffering on her grandmother's face, why she was saying such sad and touching things. By now he could not utter a word, he could understand nothing, and he imagined he was a simple ordinary man, that he was walking quickly, cheerfully through the fields, tapping with his stick, while above him was the open sky bathed in sunshine, and that he was free now as a bird and could go where he liked!

"Pavlusha, my darling son, answer me," the old woman was saying. "What is it? My own!"

"Don't disturb his holiness," Sisoy said angrily, walking about the room. "Let him sleep . . . what's the use . . . it's no good. . . ."

Three doctors arrived, consulted together, and went away again. The day was long, incredibly long, then the night came on and passed slowly, slowly, and towards morning on Saturday the lay brother went in to the old mother who was lying on the sofa in the parlour, and asked her to go into the bedroom: the bishop had just breathed his last.

Next day was Easter Sunday. There were forty-two churches and six monasteries in the town; the sonorous, joy-

ful clang of the bells hung over the town from morning till night unceasingly, setting the spring air aquiver; the birds were singing, the sun was shining brightly. The big market square was noisy, swings were going, barrel organs were playing, accordions were squeaking, drunken voices were shouting. After midday people began driving up and down the principal street.

In short, all was merriment, everything was satisfactory, just as it had been the year before, and as it will be in all likelihood next year.

A month later a new suffragan bishop was appointed, and no one thought anything more of Bishop Pyotr, and afterwards he was completely forgotten. And only the dead man's old mother, who is living to-day with her son-in-law the deacon in a remote little district town, when she goes out at night to bring her cow in and meets other women at the pasture, begins talking of her children and her grandchildren, and says that she had a son a bishop, and this she says timidly, afraid that she may not be believed. . . .

And, indeed, there are some who do not believe her.

SLEEPY

NIGHT. Varka, the little nurse, a girl of thirteen, is rocking the cradle in which the baby is lying, and humming hardly audibly:

"Hush-a-bye, my baby wee,
While I sing a song for thee."

A little green lamp is burning before the ikon; there is a string stretched from one end of the room to the other, on which baby-clothes and a pair of big black trousers are hanging. There is a big patch of green on the ceiling from the ikon lamp, and the baby-clothes and the trousers throw long shadows on the stove, on the cradle, and on Varka. . . . When the lamp begins to flicker, the green patch and the shadows come to life, and are set in motion, as though by the wind. It is stuffy. There is a smell of cabbage soup, and of the inside of a boot-shop.

The baby is crying. For a long while he has been hoarse and exhausted with crying; but he still goes on screaming and there is no knowing when he will stop. And Varka is sleepy. Her eyes are glued together, her head droops, her neck aches. She cannot move her eyelids or her lips, and she feels as though her face is dried and wooden, as though her head has become as small as the head of a pin.

"Hush-a-bye, my baby wee," she hums, "while I cook the groats for thee. . . ."

A cricket is churring in the stove. Through the door in the next room the master and the apprentice Afanasy are snoring. . . . The cradle creaks plaintively, Varka murmurs—and it all blends into that soothing music of the night to which it is so sweet to listen, when one is lying in bed. Now that music

is merely irritating and oppressive, because it goads her to sleep, and she must not sleep; if Varka—God forbid!—should fall asleep, her master and mistress would beat her.

The lamp flickers. The patch of green and the shadows are set in motion, forcing themselves on Varka's fixed, half-open eyes, and in her half slumbering brain are fashioned into misty visions. She sees dark clouds chasing one another over the sky, and screaming like the baby. But then the wind blows, the clouds are gone, and Varka sees a broad high road covered with liquid mud; along the high road stretch files of wagons, while people with wallets on their backs are trudging along and shadows flit backwards and forwards; on both sides she can see forests through the cold harsh mist. All at once the people with their wallets and their shadows fall on the ground in the liquid mud. "What is that for?" Varka asks. "To sleep, to sleep!" they answer her. And they fall sound asleep, and sleep sweetly, while crows and magpies sit on the telegraph wires, scream like the baby and try to wake them.

"Hush-a-bye, my baby wee, and I will sing a song to thee," murmurs Varka, and now she sees herself in a dark stuffy hut.

Her dead father, Yefim Stepanov, is tossing from side to side on the floor. She does not see him, but she hears him moaning and rolling on the floor from pain. "His guts have burst," as he says; the pain is so violent that he cannot utter a single word, and can only draw in his breath and clack his teeth like the rattling of a drum:

"Boo—boo—boo—boo. . . ."

Her mother, Pelageya, has run to the master's house to say that Yefim is dying. She has been gone a long time, and ought to be back. Varka lies awake on the stove, and hears her father's "boo—boo—boo." And then she hears someone has driven up to the hut. It is a young doctor from the town, who has been sent from the big house where he is staying on a visit. The doctor comes into the hut; he cannot be seen in the darkness, but he can be heard coughing and rattling the door.

"Light a candle," he says.

"Boo—boo—boo," answers Yefim.

Pelageya rushes to the stove and begins looking for the broken pot with the matches. A minute passes in silence. The doctor, feeling in his pocket, lights a match.

"In a minute, sir, in a minute," says Pelageya. She rushes out of the hut, and soon afterwards comes back with a bit of candle.

Yefim's cheeks are rosy and his eyes are shining, and there is a peculiar keenness in his glance, as though he were seeing right through the hut and the doctor.

"Come, what is it? What are you thinking about?" says the doctor, bending down to him. "Aha! have you had this long?"

"What? Dying, your honour, my hour has come. . . . I am not to stay among the living. . . ."

"Don't talk nonsense! We will cure you!"

"That's as you please, your honour, we humbly thank you, only we understand. . . . Since death has come, there it is."

The doctor spends a quarter of an hour over Yefim, then he gets up and says:

"I can do nothing. You must go into the hospital, there they will operate on you. Go at once. . . . You must go! It's rather late, they will all be asleep in the hospital, but that doesn't matter, I will give you a note. Do you hear?"

"Kind sir, but what can he go in?" says Pelageya. "We have no horse."

"Never mind. I'll ask your master, he'll let you have a horse."

The doctor goes away, the candle goes out, and again there is the sound of "boo—boo—boo." Half an hour later someone drives up to the hut. A cart has been sent to take Yefim to the hospital. He gets ready and goes. . . .

But now it is a clear bright morning. Pelageya is not at home; she has gone to the hospital to find what is being done to Yefim. Somewhere there is a baby crying, and Varka hears someone singing with her own voice:

"Hush-a-bye, my baby wee, I will sing a song to thee."

Pelageya comes back; she crosses herself and whispers:

"They put him to rights in the night, but towards morning he gave up his soul to God. . . . The Kingdom of Heaven be his and peace everlasting. . . . They say he was taken too late. . . . He ought to have gone sooner. . . ."

Varka goes out into the road and cries there, but all at once someone hits her on the back of her head so hard that her forehead knocks against a birch tree. She raises her eyes, and sees facing her, her master, the shoemaker.

"What are you about, you scabby slut?" he says. "The child is crying, and you are asleep!"

He gives her a sharp slap behind the ear, and she shakes her head, rocks the cradle, and murmurs her song. The green patch and the shadows from the trousers and the baby-clothes move up and down, nod to her, and soon take possession of her brain again. Again she sees the high road covered with liquid mud. The people with wallets on their backs and the shadows have lain down and are fast asleep. Looking at them, Varka has a passionate longing for sleep; she would lie down with enjoyment, but her mother Pelageya is walking beside her, hurrying her on. They are hastening together to the town to find situations.

"Give alms, for Christ's sake!" her mother begs of the people they meet. "Show us the Divine Mercy, kind-hearted gentlefolk!"

"Give the baby here!" a familiar voice answers. "Give the baby here!" the same voice repeats, this time harshly and angrily. "Are you asleep, you wretched girl?"

Varka jumps up, and looking round grasps what is the matter: there is no high road, no Pelageya, no people meeting them, there is only her mistress, who has come to feed the baby, and is standing in the middle of the room. While the stout, broad-shouldered woman nurses the child and soothes it, Varka stands looking at her and waiting till she has done. And outside the windows the air is already turning blue, the shadows and the green patch on the ceiling are visibly growing pale, it will soon be morning.

"Take him," says her mistress, buttoning up her chemise over her bosom; "he is crying. He must be bewitched."

Varka takes the baby, puts him in the cradle, and begins rocking it again. The green patch and the shadows gradually disappear, and now there is nothing to force itself on her eyes and cloud her brain. But she is as sleepy as before, fearfully sleepy! Varka lays her head on the edge of the cradle, and rocks her whole body to overcome her sleepiness, but yet her eyes are glued together, and her head is heavy.

"Varka, heat the stove!" she hears the master's voice through the door.

So it is time to get up and set to work. Varka leaves the cradle, and runs to the shed for firewood. She is glad. When one moves and runs about one is not so sleepy as when one is sitting down. She brings the wood, heats the stove, and feels that her wooden face is getting supple again, and that her thoughts are growing clearer.

"Varka, set the samovar!" shouts her mistress.

Varka splits a piece of wood, but has scarcely time to light the splinters and put them in the samovar, when she hears a fresh order:

"Varka, clean the master's goloshes!"

She sits down on the floor, cleans the goloshes, and thinks how nice it would be to put her head into a big deep golosh, and have a little nap in it. . . . And all at once the golosh grows, swells, fills up the whole room. Varka drops the brush, but at once shakes her head, opens her eyes wide, and tries to look at things so that they may not grow big and move before her eyes.

"Varka, wash the steps outside; I am ashamed for the customers to see them!"

Varka washes the steps, sweeps and dusts the rooms, then heats another stove and runs to the shop. There is a great deal of work: she hasn't one minute free.

But nothing is so hard as standing in the same place at the kitchen table peeling potatoes. Her head droops over the table, the potatoes dance before her eyes, the knife tumbles

out of her hand while her fat, angry mistress is moving about near her with her sleeves tucked up, talking so loud that it makes a ringing in Varka's ears. It is agonising, too, to wait at dinner, to wash, to sew, there are minutes when she longs to flop on to the floor regardless of everything, and to sleep.

The day passes. Seeing the windows getting dark, Varka presses her temples that feel as though they were made of wood, and smiles, though she does not know why. The dusk of evening caresses her eyes that will hardly keep open, and promises her sound sleep soon. In the evening visitors come.

"Varka, set the samovar!" shouts her mistress.

The samovar is a little one, and before the visitors have drunk all the tea they want, she has to heat it five times. After tea Varka stands for a whole hour on the same spot, looking at the visitors, and waiting for orders.

"Varka, run and buy three bottles of beer!"

She starts off, and tries to run as quickly as she can, to drive away sleep.

"Varka, fetch some vodka! Varka, where's the corkscrew? Varka, clean a herring!"

But now, at last, the visitors have gone; the lights are put out, the master and mistress go to bed.

"Varka, rock the baby!" she hears the last order.

The cricket churrs in the stove; the green patch on the ceiling and the shadows from the trousers and the baby-clothes force themselves on Varka's half-opened eyes again, wink at her and cloud her mind.

"Hush-a-bye, my baby wee," she murmurs, "and I will sing a song to thee."

And the baby screams, and is worn out with screaming. Again Varka sees the muddy high road, the people with wallets, her mother Pelageya, her father Yefim. She understands everything, she recognises everyone, but through her half sleep she cannot understand the force which binds her, her hand and foot, weighs upon her, and prevents her from living. She looks round, searches for that force that she may escape from it, but she cannot find it. At last, tired to death, she does

her very utmost, strains her eyes, looks up at the flickering green patch, and listening to the screaming, finds the foe who will not let her live.

That foe is the baby.

She laughs. It seems strange to her that she has failed to grasp such a simple thing before. The green patch, the shadows, and the cricket seem to laugh and wonder too.

The hallucination takes possession of Varka. She gets up from her stool, and with a broad smile on her face and wide unblinking eyes, she walks up and down the room. She feels pleased and tickled at the thought that she will be rid directly of the baby that binds her hand and foot. . . . Kill the baby and then sleep, sleep, sleep. . . .

Laughing and winking and shaking her fingers at the green patch, Varka steals up to the cradle and bends over the baby. When she has strangled him, she quickly lies down on the floor, laughs with delight that she can sleep, and in a minute is sleeping as sound as the dead.

EASTER EVE

I WAS standing on the bank of the River Goltva, waiting for the ferry-boat from the other side. At ordinary times the Goltva is a humble stream of moderate size, silent and pensive, gently glimmering from behind thick reeds; but now a regular lake lay stretched out before me. The waters of spring, running riot, had overflowed both banks and flooded both sides of the river for a long distance, submerging vegetable gardens, hayfields and marshes, so that it was no unusual thing to meet poplars and bushes sticking out above the surface of the water and looking in the darkness like grim solitary crags.

The weather seemed to me magnificent. It was dark, yet I could see the trees, the water and the people. . . . The world was lighted by the stars, which were scattered thickly all over the sky. I don't remember ever seeing so many stars. Literally one could not have put a finger in between them. There were some as big as a goose's egg, others tiny as hempseed. . . . They had come out for the festival procession, every one of them, little and big, washed, renewed and joyful, and every one of them was softly twinkling its beams. The sky was reflected in the water; the stars were bathing in its dark depths and trembling with the quivering eddies. The air was warm and still. . . . Here and there, far away on the further bank in the impenetrable darkness, several bright red lights were gleaming. . . .

A couple of paces from me I saw the dark silhouette of a peasant in a high hat, with a thick knotted stick in his hand.

"How long the ferry-boat is in coming!" I said.

"It is time it was here," the silhouette answered.

"You are waiting for the ferry-boat, too?"

"No, I am not," yawned the peasant—"I am waiting for the illumination. I should have gone, but, to tell you the truth, I haven't the five kopecks for the ferry."

"I'll give you the five kopecks."

"No; I humbly thank you. . . . With that five kopecks put up a candle for me over there in the monastery. . . . That will be more interesting, and I will stand here. What can it mean, no ferry-boat, as though it had sunk in the water!"

The peasant went up to the water's edge, took the rope in his hands, and shouted: "Ieronim! Ieron—im!"

As though in answer to his shout, the slow peal of a great bell floated across from the further bank. The note was deep and low, as from the thickest string of a double bass; it seemed as though the darkness itself had hoarsely uttered it. At once there was the sound of a cannon shot. It rolled away in the darkness and ended somewhere in the far distance behind me. The peasant took off his hat and crossed himself.

"Christ is risen," he said.

Before the vibrations of the first peal of the bell had time to die away in the air a second sounded, after it at once a third, and the darkness was filled with an unbroken quivering clamour. Near the red lights fresh lights flashed, and all began moving together and twinkling restlessly.

"Ieron—im!" we heard a hollow prolonged shout.

"They are shouting from the other bank," said the peasant, "so there is no ferry there either. Our Ieronim has gone to sleep."

The lights and the velvety chimes of the bell drew one towards them. . . . I was already beginning to lose patience and grow anxious, but behold at last, staring into the dark distance, I saw the outline of something very much like a gibbet. It was the long-expected ferry. It moved towards us with such deliberation that if it had not been that its lines grew gradually more definite, one might have supposed that it was standing still or moving to the other bank.

"Make haste! Ieronim!" shouted my peasant. "The gentleman's tired of waiting!"

The ferry crawled to the bank, gave a lurch and stopped with a creak. A tall man in a monk's cassock and a conical cap stood on it, holding the rope.

"Why have you been so long?" I asked, jumping upon the ferry.

"Forgive me, for Christ's sake," Ieronim answered gently. "Is there no one else?"

"No one. . . ."

Ieronim took hold of the rope in both hands, bent himself to the figure of a mark of interrogation, and gasped. The ferry-boat creaked and gave a lurch. The outline of the peasant in the high hat began slowly retreating from me—so the ferry was moving off. Ieronim soon drew himself up and began working with one hand only. We were silent, gazing towards the bank to which we were floating. There the illumination for which the peasant was waiting had begun. At the water's edge barrels of tar were flaring like huge camp fires. Their reflections, crimson as the rising moon, crept to meet us in long broad streaks. The burning barrels lighted up their own smoke and the long shadows of men flitting about the fire; but further to one side and behind them from where the velvety chime floated there was still the same unbroken black gloom. All at once, cleaving the darkness, a rocket zigzagged in a golden ribbon up the sky; it described an arc and, as though broken to pieces against the sky, was scattered crackling into sparks. There was a roar from the bank like a far-away hurrah.

"How beautiful!" I said.

"Beautiful beyond words!" sighed Ieronim. "Such a night, sir! Another time one would pay no attention to the fireworks, but to-day one rejoices in every vanity. Where do you come from?"

I told him where I came from.

"To be sure . . . a joyful day to-day. . . ." Ieronim went on in a weak sighing tenor like the voice of a convalescent. "The sky is rejoicing and the earth, and what is under the earth. All the creatures are keeping holiday. Only tell me,

kind sir, why, even in the time of great rejoicing, a man cannot forget his sorrows?"

I fancied that this unexpected question was to draw me into one of those endless religious conversations which bored and idle monks are so fond of. I was not disposed to talk much, and so I only asked:

"What sorrows have you, father?"

"As a rule only the same as all men, kind sir, but to-day a special sorrow has happened in the monastery: at mass, during the reading of the Bible, the monk and deacon Nikolay died."

"Well, it's God's will!" I said, falling into the monastic tone. "We must all die. To my mind, you ought to rejoice indeed. . . . They say if anyone dies at Easter he goes straight to the kingdom of heaven."

"That's true."

We sank into silence. The figure of the peasant in the high hat melted into the lines of the bank. The tar barrels were flaring up more and more.

"The Holy Scripture points clearly to the vanity of sorrow, and so does reflection," said Ieronim, breaking the silence; "but why does the heart grieve and refuse to listen to reason? Why does one want to weep bitterly?"

Ieronim shrugged his shoulders, turned to me and said quickly:

"If I died, or anyone else, it would not be worth notice, perhaps; but, you see, Nikolay is dead! No one else but Nikolay! Indeed, it's hard to believe that he is no more! I stand here on my ferry-boat and every minute I keep fancying that he will lift up his voice from the bank. He always used to come to the bank and call to me that I might not be afraid on the ferry. He used to get up from his bed at night on purpose for that. He was a kind soul. My God! how kindly and gracious! Many a mother is not so good to her child as Nikolay was to me! Lord, save his soul!"

Ieronim took hold of the rope, but turned to me again at once.

"And such a lofty intelligence, your honour," he said in a vibrating voice. "Such a sweet and harmonious tongue! Just as they will sing immediately at early matins: 'Oh lovely! oh sweet is Thy Voice!' Besides all other human qualities, he had, too, an extraordinary gift!"

"What gift?" I asked.

The monk scrutinized me, and as though he had convinced himself that he could trust me with a secret, he laughed good-humouredly.

"He had a gift for writing hymns of praise," he said. "It was a marvel, sir; you couldn't call it anything else! You will be amazed if I tell you about it. Our Father Archimandrite comes from Moscow, the Father Sub-Prior studied at the Kazan academy, we have wise monks and elders, but, would you believe it, no one could write them; while Nikolay, a simple monk, a deacon, had not studied anywhere, and had not even any outer appearance of it, but he wrote them! A marvel! a real marvel!" Ieronim clasped his hands and, completely forgetting the rope, went on eagerly:

"The Father Sub-Prior has great difficulty in composing sermons; when he wrote the history of the monastery he worried all the brotherhood and drove a dozen times to town, while Nikolay wrote canticles! Hymns of praise! That's a very different thing from a sermon or a history!"

"Is it difficult to write them?" I asked.

"There's great difficulty!" Ieronim wagged his head. "You can do nothing by wisdom and holiness if God has not given you the gift. The monks who don't understand argue that you only need to know the life of the saint for whom you are writing the hymn, and to make it harmonize with the other hymns of praise. But that's a mistake, sir. Of course, anyone who writes canticles must know the life of the saint to perfection, to the least trivial detail. To be sure, one must make them harmonize with the other canticles and know where to begin and what to write about. To give you an instance, the first response begins everywhere with 'the chosen' or 'the elect.' . . . The first line must always begin with 'the angel.'

In the canticle of praise to Jesus the Most Sweet, if you are interested in the subject, it begins like this: 'Of angels Creator and Lord of all powers!' In the canticle to the Holy Mother of God: 'Of angels the foremost sent down from on high,' to Nikolay, the Wonder-worker—'an angel in semblance, though in substance a man,' and so on. Everywhere you begin with the angel. Of course, it would be impossible without making them harmonize, but the lives of the saints and conformity with the others is not what matters; what matters is the beauty and sweetness of it. Everything must be harmonious, brief and complete. There must be in every line softness, graciousness and tenderness; not one word should be harsh or rough or unsuitable. It must be written so that the worshipper may rejoice at heart and weep, while his mind is stirred and he is thrown into a tremor. In the canticle to the Holy Mother are the words: 'Rejoice, O Thou too high for human thought to reach! Rejoice, O Thou too deep for angels' eyes to fathom!' In another place in the same canticle: 'Rejoice, O tree that bearest the fair fruit of light that is the food of the faithful! Rejoice, O tree of gracious spreading shade, under which there is shelter for multitudes!' "

Ieronim hid his face in his hands, as though frightened at something or overcome with shame, and shook his head.

"Tree that bearest the fair fruit of light . . . tree of gracious spreading shade. . . ." he muttered. "To think that a man should find words like those! Such a power is a gift from God! For brevity he packs many thoughts into one phrase, and how smooth and complete it all is! 'Light-radiating torch to all that be . . .' comes in the canticle to Jesus the Most Sweet. 'Light-radiating!' There is no such word in conversation or in books, but you see he invented it, he found it in his mind! Apart from the smoothness and grandeur of language, sir, every line must be beautified in every way; there must be flowers and lightning and wind and sun and all the objects of the visible world. And every exclamation ought to be put so as to be smooth and easy for the ear. 'Rejoice, thou flower of heavenly growth!' comes in the hymn to Nikolay

the Wonder-worker. It's not simply 'heavenly flower,' but 'flower of heavenly growth.' It's smoother so and sweet to the ear. That was just as Nikolay wrote it! exactly like that! I can't tell you how he used to write!"

"Well, in that case it is a pity he is dead," I said; "but let us get on, father, or we shall be late."

Ieronim started and ran to the rope; they were beginning to peal all the bells. Probably the procession was already going on near the monastery, for all the dark space behind the tar barrels was now dotted with moving lights.

"Did Nikolay print his hymns?" I asked Ieronim.

"How could he print them?" he sighed. "And, indeed, it would be strange to print them. What would be the object? No one in the monastery takes any interest in them. They don't like them. They knew Nikolay wrote them, but they let it pass unnoticed. No one esteems new writings nowadays, sir!"

"Were they prejudiced against him?"

"Yes, indeed. If Nikolay had been an elder perhaps the brethren would have been interested, but he wasn't forty, you know. There were some who laughed and even thought his writing a sin."

"What did he write them for?"

"Chiefly for his own comfort. Of all the brotherhood, I was the only one who read his hymns. I used to go to him in secret, that no one else might know of it, and he was glad that I took an interest in them. He would embrace me, stroke my head, speak to me in caressing words as to a little child. He would shut his cell, make me sit down beside him, and begin to read. . . ."

Ieronim left the rope and came up to me.

"We were dear friends in a way," he whispered, looking at me with shining eyes. "Where he went I would go. If I were not there he would miss me. And he cared more for me than for anyone, and all because I used to weep over his hymns. It makes me sad to remember. Now I feel just like an orphan or a widow. You know, in our monastery they

are all good people, kind and pious, but . . . there is no one with softness and refinement, they are just like peasants. They all speak loudly, and tramp heavily when they walk; they are noisy, they clear their throats, but Nikolay always talked softly, caressingly, and if he noticed that anyone was asleep or praying he would slip by like a fly or a gnat. His face was tender, compassionate. . . ."

Ieronim heaved a deep sigh and took hold of the rope again. We were by now approaching the bank. We floated straight out of the darkness and stillness of the river into an enchanted realm, full of stifling smoke, crackling lights and uproar. By now one could distinctly see people moving near the tar barrels. The flickering of the lights gave a strange, almost fantastic, expression to their figures and red faces. From time to time one caught among the heads and faces a glimpse of a horse's head motionless as though cast in copper.

"They'll begin singing the Easter hymn directly, . . ." said Ieronim, "and Nikolay is gone; there is no one to appreciate it. . . . There was nothing written dearer to him than that hymn. He used to take in every word! You'll be there, sir, so notice what is sung; it takes your breath away!"

"Won't you be in church, then?"

"I can't; . . . I have to work the ferry. . . ."

"But won't they relieve you?"

"I don't know. . . . I ought to have been relieved at eight; but, as you see, they don't come! . . . And I must own I should have liked to be in the church. . . ."

"Are you a monk?"

"Yes . . . that is, I am a lay brother."

The ferry ran into the bank and stopped. I thrust a five kopeck piece into Ieronim's hand for taking me across, and jumped on land. Immediately a cart with a boy and a sleeping woman in it drove creaking onto the ferry. Ieronim, with a faint glow from the lights on his figure, pressed on the rope, bent down to it, and started the ferry back. . . .

I took a few steps through mud, but a little farther walked on a soft, freshly trodden path. This path led to the dark

monastery gates, that looked like a cavern through a cloud of smoke, through a disorderly crowd of people, unharnessed horses, carts and chaises. All this crowd was rattling, snorting, laughing, and the crimson light and wavering shadows from the smoke flickered over it all. . . . A perfect chaos! And in this hubbub the people yet found room to load a little cannon and to sell cakes. There was no less commotion on the other side of the wall in the monastery precincts, but there was more regard for decorum and order. Here there was a smell of juniper and incense. They talked loudly, but there was no sound of laughter or snorting. Near the tombstones and crosses people pressed close to one another with Easter cakes and bundles in their arms. Apparently many had come from a long distance for their cakes to be blessed and now were exhausted. Young lay brothers, making a metallic sound with their boots, ran busily along the iron slabs that paved the way from the monastery gates to the church door. They were busy and shouting on the belfry, too.

"What a restless night!" I thought. "How nice!"

One was tempted to see the same unrest and sleeplessness in all nature, from the night darkness to the iron slabs, the crosses on the tombs and the trees under which the people were moving to and fro. But nowhere was the excitement and restlessness so marked as in the church. An unceasing struggle was going on in the entrance between the inflowing stream and the outflowing stream. Some were going in, others going out and soon coming back again to stand still for a little and begin moving again. People were scurrying from place to place, lounging about as though they were looking for something. The stream flowed from the entrance all round the church, disturbing even the front rows, where persons of weight and dignity were standing. There could be no thought of concentrated prayer. There were no prayers at all, but a sort of continuous, childishly irresponsible joy, seeking a pretext to break out and vent itself in some movement, even in senseless jostling and shoving.

The same unaccustomed movement is striking in the Easter

service itself. The altar gates are flung wide open, thick clouds of incense float in the air near the candelabra; wherever one looks there are lights, the gleam and splutter of candles. . . . There is no reading; restless and light-hearted singing goes on to the end without ceasing. After each hymn the clergy change their vestments and come out to burn incense, which is repeated every ten minutes.

I had no sooner taken a place, when a wave rushed from in front and forced me back. A tall thick-set deacon walked before me with a long red candle; the grey-headed archimandrite in his golden mitre hurried after him with the censer. When they had vanished from sight the crowd squeezed me back to my former position. But ten minutes had not passed before a new wave burst on me, and again the deacon appeared. This time he was followed by the Father Sub-Prior, the man who, as Ieronim had told me, was writing the history of the monastery.

As I mingled with the crowd and caught the infection of the universal joyful excitement, I felt unbearably sore on Ieronim's account. Why did they not send someone to relieve him? Why could not someone of less feeling and less susceptibility go on the ferry? "Lift up thine eyes, O Sion, and look around," they sang in the choir, "for thy children have come to thee as to a beacon of divine light from north and south, and from east and from the sea. . . ."

I looked at the faces; they all had a lively expression of triumph, but no one was listening to what was being sung and taking it in, and not one was "holding his breath." Why was not Ieronim released? I could fancy Ieronim standing meekly somewhere by the wall, bending forward and hungrily drinking in the beauty of the holy phrase. All this that glided by the ears of people standing by me he would have eagerly drunk in with his delicately sensitive soul, and would have been spell-bound to ecstasy, to holding his breath, and there would not have been a man happier than he in all the church. Now he was plying to and fro over the dark river and grieving for his dead friend and brother.

The wave surged back. A stout smiling monk, playing with his rosary and looking round behind him, squeezed sideways by me, making way for a lady in a hat and velvet cloak. A monastery servant hurried after the lady, holding a chair over our heads.

I came out of the church. I wanted to have a look at the dead Nikolay, the unknown canticle writer. I walked about the monastery wall, where there was a row of cells, peeped into several windows, and, seeing nothing, came back again. I do not regret now that I did not see Nikolay; God knows, perhaps if I had seen him I should have lost the picture my imagination paints for me now. I imagine that lovable poetical figure, solitary and not understood, who went out at nights to call to Ieronim over the water, and filled his hymns with flowers, stars and sunbeams, as a pale timid man with soft, mild, melancholy features. His eyes must have shone, not only with intelligence, but with kindly tenderness and that hardly restrained childlike enthusiasm which I could hear in Ieronim's voice when he quoted to me passages from the hymns.

When we came out of church after mass it was no longer night. The morning was beginning. The stars had gone out and the sky was a morose greyish blue. The iron slabs, the tombstones and the buds on the trees were covered with dew. There was a sharp freshness in the air. Outside the precincts I did not find the same animated scene as I had beheld in the night. Horses and men looked exhausted, drowsy, scarcely moved, while nothing was left of the tar barrels but heaps of black ash. When anyone is exhausted and sleepy he fancies that nature, too, is in the same condition. It seemed to me that the trees and the young grass were asleep. It seemed as though even the bells were not pealing so loudly and gaily as at night. The restlessness was over, and of the excitement nothing was left but a pleasant weariness, a longing for sleep and warmth.

Now I could see both banks of the river; a faint mist hovered over it in shifting masses. There was a harsh cold breath from

the water. When I jumped on to the ferry, a chaise and some two dozen men and women were standing on it already. The rope, wet and as I fancied drowsy, stretched far away across the broad river and in places disappeared in the white mist.

"Christ is risen! Is there no one else?" asked a soft voice.

I recognized the voice of Ieronim. There was no darkness now to hinder me from seeing the monk. He was a tall narrow-shouldered man of five-and-thirty, with large rounded features, with half-closed listless-looking eyes and an unkempt wedge-shaped beard. He had an extraordinarily sad and exhausted look.

"They have not relieved you yet?" I asked in surprise.

"Me?" he answered, turning to me his chilled and dewy face with a smile. "There is no one to take my place now till morning. They'll all be going to the Father Archimandrite's to break the fast directly."

With the help of a little peasant in a hat of reddish fur that looked like the little wooden tubs in which honey is sold, he threw his weight on the rope; they gasped simultaneously, and the ferry started.

We floated across, disturbing on the way the lazily rising mist. Everyone was silent. Ieronim worked mechanically with one hand. He slowly passed his mild lustreless eyes over us; then his glance rested on the rosy face of a young merchant's wife with black eyebrows, who was standing on the ferry beside me silently shrinking from the mist that wrapped her about. He did not take his eyes off her face all the way.

There was little that was masculine in that prolonged gaze. It seemed to me that Ieronim was looking in the woman's face for the soft and tender features of his dead friend.

ROTHSCHILD'S FIDDLE

The town was a little one, worse than a village, and it was inhabited by scarcely any but old people who died with an infrequency that was really annoying. In the hospital and in the prison fortress very few coffins were needed. In fact business was bad. If Yakov Ivanov had been an undertaker in the chief town of the province he would certainly have had a house of his own, and people would have addressed him as Yakov Matveyitch; here in this wretched little town people called him simply Yakov; his nickname in the street was for some reason Bronze, and he lived in a poor way like a humble peasant, in a little old hut in which there was only one room, and in this room he and Marfa, the stove, a double bed, the coffins, his bench, and all their belongings were crowded together.

Yakov made good, solid coffins. For peasants and working people he made them to fit himself, and this was never unsuccessful, for there were none taller and stronger than he, even in the prison, though he was seventy. For gentry and for women he made them to measure, and used an iron foot-rule for the purpose. He was very unwilling to take orders for children's coffins, and made them straight off without measurements, contemptuously, and when he was paid for the work he always said:

"I must confess I don't like trumpery jobs."

Apart from his trade, playing the fiddle brought him in a small income.

The Jews' orchestra conducted by Moisey Ilyitch Shahkes, the tinsmith, who took more than half their receipts for himself, played as a rule at weddings in the town. As Yakov played very well on the fiddle, especially Russian songs, Shahkes

sometimes invited him to join the orchestra at a fee of half a rouble a day, in addition to tips from the visitors. When Bronze sat in the orchestra first of all his face became crimson and perspiring; it was hot, there was a suffocating smell of garlic, the fiddle squeaked, the double bass wheezed close to his right ear, while the flute wailed at his left, played by a gaunt, red-haired Jew who had a perfect network of red and blue veins all over his face, and who bore the name of the famous millionaire Rothschild. And this accursed Jew contrived to play even the liveliest things plaintively. For no apparent reason Yakov little by little became possessed by hatred and contempt for the Jews, and especially for Rothschild; he began to pick quarrels with him, rail at him in unseemly language and once even tried to strike him, and Rothschild was offended and said, looking at him ferociously:

"If it were not that I respect you for your talent, I would have sent you flying out of the window."

Then he began to weep. And because of this Yakov was not often asked to play in the orchestra; he was only sent for in case of extreme necessity in the absence of one of the Jews.

Yakov was never in a good temper, as he was continually having to put up with terrible losses. For instance, it was a sin to work on Sundays or Saints' days, and Monday was an unlucky day, so that in the course of the year there were some two hundred days on which, whether he liked it or not, he had to sit with his hands folded. And only think, what a loss that meant. If anyone in the town had a wedding without music, or if Shahkes did not send for Yakov, that was a loss, too. The superintendent of the prison was ill for two years and was wasting away, and Yakov was impatiently waiting for him to die, but the superintendent went away to the chief town of the province to be doctored, and there took and died. There's a loss for you, ten roubles at least, as there would have been an expensive coffin to make, lined with brocade. The thought of his losses haunted Yakov, especially at night; he laid his fiddle on the bed beside him, and when all sorts of nonsensical ideas came into his mind he touched a string;

the fiddle gave out a sound in the darkness, and he felt better.

On the sixth of May of the previous year Marfa had suddenly been taken ill. The old woman's breathing was laboured, she drank a great deal of water, and she staggered as she walked, yet she lighted the stove in the morning and even went herself to get water. Towards evening she lay down. Yakov played his fiddle all day; when it was quite dark he took the book in which he used every day to put down his losses, and, feeling dull, he began adding up the total for the year. It came to more than a thousand roubles. This so agitated him that he flung the reckoning beads down, and trampled them under his feet. Then he picked up the reckoning beads, and again spent a long time clicking with them and heaving deep, strained sighs. His face was crimson and wet with perspiration. He thought that if he had put that lost thousand roubles in the bank, the interest for a year would have been at least forty roubles, so that forty roubles was a loss too. In fact, wherever one turned there were losses and nothing else.

"Yakov!" Marfa called unexpectedly. "I am dying."

He looked round at his wife. Her face was rosy with fever, unusually bright and joyful-looking. Bronze, accustomed to seeing her face always pale, timid, and unhappy-looking, was bewildered. It looked as if she really were dying and were glad that she was going away for ever from that hut, from the coffins, and from Yakov. . . . And she gazed at the ceiling and moved her lips, and her expression was one of happiness, as though she saw death as her deliverer and were whispering with him.

It was daybreak; from the windows one could see the flush of dawn. Looking at the old woman, Yakov for some reason reflected that he had not once in his life been affectionate to her, had had no feeling for her, had never once thought to buy her a kerchief, or to bring her home some dainty from a wedding, but had done nothing but shout at her, scold her for his losses, shake his fists at her; it is true he had never actually

beaten her, but he had frightened her, and at such times she had always been numb with terror. Why, he had forbidden her to drink tea because they spent too much without that, and she drank only hot water. And he understood why she had such a strange, joyful face now, and he was overcome with dread.

As soon as it was morning he borrowed a horse from a neighbour and took Marfa to the hospital. There were not many patients there, and so he had not long to wait, only three hours. To his great satisfaction the patients were not being received by the doctor, who was himself ill, but by the assistant, Maxim Nikolaitch, an old man of whom everyone in the town used to say that, though he drank and was quarrelsome, he knew more than the doctor.

"I wish you good-day," said Yakov, leading his old woman into the consulting room. "You must excuse us, Maxim Nikolaitch, we are always troubling you with our trumpery affairs. Here you see my better half is ailing, the partner of my life, as they say, excuse the expression. . . ."

Knitting his grizzled brows and stroking his whiskers the assistant began to examine the old woman, and she sat on a stool, a wasted, bent figure with a sharp nose and open mouth, looking like a bird that wants to drink.

"H—m . . . Ah! . . ." the assistant said slowly, and he heaved a sigh. "Influenza and possibly fever. There's typhus in the town now. Well, the old woman has lived her life, thank God. . . . How old is she?"

"She'll be seventy in another year, Maxim Nikolaitch."

"Well, the old woman has lived her life, it's time to say good-bye."

"You are quite right in what you say, of course, Maxim Nikolaitch," said Yakov, smiling from politeness, "and we thank you feelingly for your kindness, but allow me to say every insect wants to live."

"To be sure," said the assistant, in a tone which suggested that it depended upon him whether the woman lived or died. "Well, then, my good fellow, put a cold compress on her

head, and give her these powders twice a day, and so good-bye. Bonjour."

From the expression of his face Yakov saw that it was a bad case, and that no sort of powders would be any help; it was clear to him that Marfa would die very soon, if not to-day, to-morrow. He nudged the assistant's elbow, winked at him, and said in a low voice:

"If you would just cup her, Maxim Nikolaitch."

"I have no time, I have no time, my good fellow. Take your old woman and go in God's name. Good-bye."

"Be so gracious," Yakov besought him. "You know yourself that if, let us say, it were her stomach or her inside that were bad, then powders or drops, but you see she had got a chill! In a chill the first thing is to let blood, Maxim Nikolaitch."

But the assistant had already sent for the next patient, and a peasant woman came into the consulting room with a boy.

"Go along, go along," he said to Yakov, frowning. "It's no use to——"

"In that case put on leeches, anyway! Make us pray for you for ever."

The assistant flew into a rage and shouted:

"You speak to me again! You blockhead. . . ."

Yakov flew into a rage too, and he turned crimson all over, but he did not utter a word. He took Marfa on his arm and led her out of the room. Only when they were sitting in the cart he looked morosely and ironically at the hospital, and said:

"A nice set of artists they have settled here! No fear, but he would have cupped a rich man, but even a leech he grudges to the poor. The Herods!"

When they got home and went into the hut, Marfa stood for ten minutes holding on to the stove. It seemed to her that if she were to lie down Yakov would talk to her about his losses, and scold her for lying down and not wanting to work. Yakov looked at her drearily and thought that to-morrow was St. John the Divine's, and next day St. Nikolay

the Wonder-worker's, and the day after that was Sunday, and then Monday, an unlucky day. For four days he would not be able to work, and most likely Marfa would die on one of those days; so he would have to make the coffin to-day. He picked up his iron rule, went up to the old woman and took her measure. Then she lay down, and he crossed himself and began making the coffin.

When the coffin was finished Bronze put on his spectacles and wrote in his book: "Marfa Ivanov's coffin, two roubles, forty kopecks."

And he heaved a sigh. The old woman lay all the time silent with her eyes closed. But in the evening, when it got dark, she suddenly called the old man.

"Do you remember, Yakov," she asked, looking at him joyfully. "Do you remember fifty years ago God gave us a little baby with flaxen hair? We used always to be sitting by the river then, singing songs . . . under the willows," and laughing bitterly, she added: "The baby girl died."

Yakov racked his memory, but could not remember the baby or the willows.

"It's your fancy," he said.

The priest arrived; he administered the sacrament and extreme unction. Then Marfa began muttering something unintelligible, and towards morning she died. Old women, neighbours, washed her, dressed her, and laid her in the coffin. To avoid paying the sacristan, Yakov read the psalms over the body himself, and they got nothing out of him for the grave, as the grave-digger was a crony of his. Four peasants carried the coffin to the graveyard, not for money, but from respect. The coffin was followed by old women, beggars, and a couple of crazy saints, and the people who met it crossed themselves piously. . . . And Yakov was very much pleased that it was so creditable, so decorous, and so cheap, and no offence to anyone. As he took his last leave of Marfa he touched the coffin and thought: "A good piece of work!"

But as he was going back from the cemetery he was overcome by acute depression. He didn't feel quite well: his

breathing was laboured and feverish, his legs felt weak, and he had a craving for drink. And thoughts of all sorts forced themselves on his mind. He remembered again that all his life he had never felt for Marfa, had never been affectionate to her. The fifty-two years they had lived in the same hut had dragged on a long, long time, but it had somehow happened that in all that time he had never once thought of her, had paid no attention to her, as though she had been a cat or a dog. And yet, every day, she had lighted the stove, had cooked and baked, had gone for the water, had chopped the wood, had slept with him in the same bed, and when he came home drunk from the weddings always reverently hung his fiddle on the wall and put him to bed, and all this in silence, with a timid, anxious expression.

Rothschild, smiling and bowing, came to meet Yakov.

"I was looking for you, uncle," he said. "Moisey Ilyitch sends you his greetings and bids you come to him at once."

Yakov felt in no mood for this. He wanted to cry.

"Leave me alone," he said, and walked on.

"How can you," Rothschild said, fluttered, running on in front. "Moisey Ilyitch will be offended! He bade you come at once!"

Yakov was revolted at the Jew's gasping for breath and blinking, and having so many red freckles on his face. And it was disgusting to look at his green coat with black patches on it, and all his fragile, refined figure.

"Why are you pestering me, garlic?" shouted Yakov. "Don't persist!"

The Jew got angry and shouted too:

"Not so noisy, please, or I'll send you flying over the fence!"

"Get out of my sight!" roared Yakov, and rushed at him with his fists. "One can't live for you scabby Jews!"

Rothschild, half dead with terror, crouched down and waved his hands over his head, as though to ward off a blow; then he leapt up and ran away as fast as his legs could carry him: as he ran he gave little skips and kept clasping his hands, and Yakov could see how his long thin spine wriggled. Some

boys, delighted at the incident, ran after him shouting "Jew! Jew!" Some dogs joined in the chase barking. Someone burst into a roar of laughter, then gave a whistle; the dogs barked with even more noise and unanimity. Then a dog must have bitten Rothschild, as a desperate, sickly scream was heard.

Yakov went for a walk on the grazing ground, then wandered on at random in the outskirts of the town, while the street boys shouted:

"Here's Bronze! Here's Bronze!"

He came to the river, where the curlews floated in the air uttering shrill cries and the ducks quacked. The sun was blazing hot, and there was a glitter from the water, so that it hurt the eyes to look at it. Yakov walked by a path along the bank and saw a plump, rosy-cheeked lady come out of the bathing-shed, and thought about her: "Ugh! you otter!"

Not far from the bathing-shed boys were catching crayfish with bits of meat; seeing him, they began shouting spitefully, "Bronze! Bronze!" And then he saw an old spreading willow-tree with a big hollow in it, and a crow's nest on it. . . . And suddenly there rose up vividly in Yakov's memory a baby with flaxen hair, and the willow-tree Marfa had spoken of. Why, that is it, the same willow-tree—green, still, and sorrowful. . . . How old it has grown, poor thing!

He sat down under it and began to recall the past. On the other bank, where now there was the water meadow, in those days there stood a big birch-wood, and yonder on the bare hillside that could be seen on the horizon an old, old pine forest used to be a bluish patch in the distance. Big boats used to sail on the river. But now it was all smooth and unruffled, and on the other bank there stood now only one birch-tree, youthful and slender like a young lady, and there was nothing on the river but ducks and geese, and it didn't look as though there had ever been boats on it. It seemed as though even the geese were fewer than of old. Yakov shut his eyes, and in his imagination huge flocks of white geese soared, meeting one another.

He wondered how it had happened that for the last forty or fifty years of his life he had never once been to the river, or if he had been by it he had not paid attention to it. Why, it was a decent-sized river, not a trumpery one; he might have gone in for fishing and sold the fish to merchants, officials, and the bar-keeper at the station, and then have put money in the bank; he might have sailed in a boat from one house to another, playing the fiddle, and people of all classes would have paid to hear him; he might have tried getting big boats afloat again—that would be better than making coffins; he might have bred geese, killed them and sent them in the winter to Moscow. Why, the feathers alone would very likely mount up to ten roubles in the year. But he had wasted his time, he had done nothing of this. What losses! Ah! What losses! And if he had gone in for all those things at once—catching fish and playing the fiddle, and running boats and killing geese—what a fortune he would have made! But nothing of this had happened, even in his dreams; life had passed uselessly without any pleasure, had been wasted for nothing, not even a pinch of snuff; there was nothing left in front, and if one looked back—there was nothing there but losses, and such terrible ones, it made one cold all over. And why was it a man could not live so as to avoid these losses and misfortunes? One wondered why they had cut down the birch copse and the pine forest. Why was he walking with no reason on the grazing ground? Why do people always do what isn't needful? Why had Yakov all his life scolded, bellowed, shaken his fists, ill-treated his wife, and, one might ask, what necessity was there for him to frighten and insult the Jew that day? Why did people in general hinder each other from living? What losses were due to it! what terrible losses! If it were not for hatred and malice people would get immense benefit from one another.

In the evening and the night he had visions of the baby, of the willow, of fish, of slaughtered geese, and Marfa looking in profile like a bird that wants to drink, and the pale, pitiful face of Rothschild, and faces moved down from all sides and

muttered of losses. He tossed from side to side, and got out of bed five times to play the fiddle.

In the morning he got up with an effort and went to the hospital. The same Maxim Nikolaitch told him to put a cold compress on his head, and gave him some powders, and from his tone and expression of face Yakov realized that it was a bad case and that no powders would be any use. As he went home afterwards, he reflected that death would be nothing but a benefit; he would not have to eat or drink, or pay taxes or offend people, and, as a man lies in his grave not for one year but for hundreds and thousands, if one reckoned it up the gain would be enormous. A man's life meant loss; death meant gain. This reflection was, of course, a just one, but yet it was bitter and mortifying; why was the order of the world so strange, that life, which is given to man only once, passes away without benefit?

He was not sorry to die, but at home, as soon as he saw his fiddle, it sent a pang to his heart and he felt sorry. He could not take the fiddle with him to the grave, and now it would be left forlorn, and the same thing would happen to it as to the birch copse and the pine forest. Everything in this world was wasted and would be wasted! Yakov went out of the hut and sat in the doorway, pressing the fiddle to his bosom. Thinking of his wasted, profitless life, he began to play, he did not know what, but it was plaintive and touching, and tears trickled down his cheeks. And the harder he thought, the more mournfully the fiddle wailed.

The latch clicked once and again, and Rothschild appeared at the gate. He walked across half the yard boldly, but seeing Yakov he stopped short, and seemed to shrink together, and probably from terror, began making signs with his hands as though he wanted to show on his fingers what o'clock it was.

"Come along, it's all right," said Yakov in a friendly tone, and he beckoned him to come up. "Come along!"

Looking at him mistrustfully and apprehensively, Rothschild began to advance, and stopped seven feet off.

"Be so good as not to beat me," he said, ducking. "Moisey

Ilyitch has sent me again. 'Don't be afraid,' he said; 'go to Yakov again and tell him,' he said, 'we can't get on without him.' There is a wedding on Wednesday. . . . Ye—es! Mr. Shapovalov is marrying his daughter to a good man. . . . And it will be a grand wedding, oo-oo!" added the Jew, screwing up one eye.

"I can't come," said Yakov, breathing hard. "I'm ill, brother."

And he began playing again, and the tears gushed from his eyes on to the fiddle. Rothschild listened attentively, standing sideways to him and folding his arms on his chest. The scared and perplexed expression on his face, little by little, changed to a look of woe and suffering; he rolled his eyes as though he were experiencing an agonizing ecstasy, and articulated, "Vachhh!" and tears slowly ran down his cheeks and trickled on his greenish coat.

And Yakov lay in bed all the rest of the day grieving. In the evening, when the priest confessing him asked, Did he remember any special sin he had committed? straining his failing memory he thought again of Marfa's unhappy face, and the despairing shriek of the Jew when the dog bit him, and said, hardly audibly, "Give the fiddle to Rothschild."

"Very well," answered the priest.

And now everyone in the town asks where Rothschild got such a fine fiddle. Did he buy it or steal it? Or perhaps it had come to him as a pledge. He gave up the flute long ago, and now plays nothing but the fiddle. As plaintive sounds flow now from his bow, as came once from his flute, but when he tries to repeat what Yakov played, sitting in the doorway, the effect is something so sad and sorrowful that his audience weep, and he himself rolls his eyes and articulates "Vachhh! . . ." And this new air was so much liked in the town that the merchants and officials used to be continually sending for Rothschild and making him play it over and over again a dozen times.

SORROW

THE turner, Grigory Petrov, who had been known for years past as a splendid craftsman, and at the same time as the most senseless peasant in the Galtchinskoy district, was taking his old woman to the hospital. He had to drive over twenty miles, and it was an awful road. A government post driver could hardly have coped with it, much less an incompetent sluggard like Grigory. A cutting cold wind was blowing straight in his face. Clouds of snowflakes were whirling round and round in all directions, so that one could not tell whether the snow was falling from the sky or rising from the earth. The fields, the telegraph posts, and the forest could not be seen for the fog of snow. And when a particularly violent gust of wind swooped down on Grigory, even the yoke above the horse's head could not be seen. The wretched, feeble little nag crawled slowly along. It took all its strength to drag its legs out of the snow and to tug with its head. The turner was in a hurry. He kept restlessly hopping up and down on the front seat and lashing the horse's back.

"Don't cry, Matryona, . . ." he muttered. "Have a little patience. Please God we shall reach the hospital, and in a trice it will be the right thing for you. . . . Pavel Ivanitch will give you some little drops, or tell them to bleed you; or maybe his honor will be pleased to rub you with some sort of spirit—it'll . . . draw it out of your side. Pavel Ivanitch will do his best. He will shout and stamp about, but he will do his best. . . . He is a nice gentleman, affable, God give him health! As soon as we get there he will dart out of his room and will begin calling me names. 'How? Why so?' he will cry. 'Why did you not come at the right time? I am not a dog to be hanging about waiting on you devils all day. Why

did you not come in the morning? Go away! Get out of my sight. Come again to-morrow.' And I shall say: 'Mr. Doctor! Pavel Ivanitch! Your honor!' Get on, do! plague take you, you devil! Get on!"

The turner lashed his nag, and without looking at the old woman went on muttering to himself:

"'Your honor! It's true as before God. . . . Here's the Cross for you, I set off almost before it was light. How could I be here in time if the Lord. . . . The Mother of God . . . is wroth, and has sent such a snowstorm? Kindly look for yourself. . . . Even a first-rate horse could not do it, while mine—you can see for yourself—is not a horse but a disgrace.' And Pavel Ivanitch will frown and shout: 'We know you! You always find some excuse! Especially you, Grishka; I know you of old! I'll be bound you have stopped at half a dozen taverns!' And I shall say: 'Your honor! am I a criminal or a heathen? My old woman is giving up her soul to God, she is dying, and am I going to run from tavern to tavern! What an idea, upon my word! Plague take them, the taverns!' Then Pavel Ivanitch will order you to be taken into the hospital, and I shall fall at his feet. . . . 'Panel Ivanitch! Your honor, we thank you most humbly! Forgive us fools and anathemas, don't be hard on us peasants! We deserve a good kicking, while you graciously put yourself out and mess your feet in the snow!' And Pavel Ivanitch will give me a look as though he would like to hit me, and will say: 'You'd much better not be swilling vodka, you fool, but taking pity on your old woman instead of falling at my feet. You want a thrashing!' 'You are right there—a thrashing, Pavel Ivanitch, strike me God! But how can we help bowing down at your feet if you are our benefactor, and a real father to us? Your honor! I give you my word . . . here as before God, . . . you may spit in my face if I deceive you: as soon as my Matryona, this same here, is well again and restored to her natural condition, I'll make anything for your honor that you would like to order! A cigarette-case, if you like, of the best birchwood, . . . balls for croquet, skittles of the most foreign pattern I

can turn. . . . I will make anything for you! I won't take a farthing from you. In Moscow they would charge you four roubles for such a cigarette-case, but I won't take a farthing.' The doctor will laugh and say: 'Oh, all right, all right. . . . I see! But it's a pity you are a drunkard. . . .' I know how to manage the gentry, old girl. There isn't a gentleman I couldn't talk to. Only God grant we don't get off the road. Oh, how it is blowing! One's eyes are full of snow."

And the turner went on muttering endlessly. He prattled on mechanically to get a little relief from his depressing feelings. He had plenty of words on his tongue, but the thoughts and questions in his brain were even more numerous. Sorrow had come upon the turner unawares, unlooked-for, and unexpected, and now he could not get over it, could not recover himself. He had lived hitherto in unruffled calm, as though in drunken half-consciousness, knowing neither grief nor joy, and now he was suddenly aware of a dreadful pain in his heart. The careless idler and drunkard found himself quite suddenly in the position of a busy man, weighed down by anxieties and haste, and even struggling with nature.

The turner remembered that his trouble had begun the evening before. When he had come home yesterday evening, a little drunk as usual, and from long-established habit had begun swearing and shaking his fists, his old woman had looked at her rowdy spouse as she had never looked at him before. Usually, the expression in her aged eyes was that of a martyr, meek like that of a dog frequently beaten and badly fed; this time she had looked at him sternly and immovably, as saints in the holy pictures or dying people look. From that strange, evil look in her eyes the trouble had begun. The turner, stupefied with amazement, borrowed a horse from a neighbor, and now was taking his old woman to the hospital in the hope that, by means of powders and ointments, Pavel Ivanitch would bring back his old woman's habitual expression.

"I say, Matryona, . . ." the turner muttered, "if Pavel Ivanitch asks you whether I beat you, say, 'Never!' and I never will beat you again. I swear it. And did I ever beat

you out of spite? I just beat you without thinking. I am sorry for you. Some men wouldn't trouble, but here I am taking you. . . . I am doing my best. And the way it snows, the way it snows! Thy Will be done, O Lord! God grant we don't get off the road. . . . Does your side ache, Matryona, that you don't speak? I ask you, does your side ache?"

It struck him as strange that the snow on his old woman's face was not melting; it was queer that the face itself looked somehow drawn, and had turned a pale gray, dingy waxen hue and had grown grave and solemn.

"You are a fool!" muttered the turner. . . . "I tell you on my conscience, before God, . . . and you go and . . . Well, you are a fool! I have a good mind not to take you to Pavel Ivanitch!"

The turner let the reins go and began thinking. He could not bring himself to look round at his old woman: he was frightened. He was afraid, too, of asking her a question and not getting an answer. At last, to make an end of uncertainty, without looking round he felt his old woman's cold hand. The lifted hand fell like a log.

"She is dead, then! What a business!"

And the turner cried. He was not so much sorry as annoyed. He thought how quickly everything passes in this world! His trouble had hardly begun when the final catastrophe had happened. He had not had time to live with his old woman, to show her he was sorry for her before she died. He had lived with her for forty years, but those forty years had passed by as it were in a fog. What with drunkenness, quarreling, and poverty, there had been no feeling of life. And, as though to spite him, his old woman died at the very time when he felt he was sorry for her, that he could not live without her, and that he had behaved dreadfully badly to her.

"Why, she used to go the round of the village," he remembered. "I sent her out myself to beg for bread. What a business! She ought to have lived another ten years, the silly thing; as it is I'll be bound she thinks I really was that sort of man. . . . Holy Mother! but where the devil am I driving? There's no need for a doctor now, but a burial. Turn back!"

Grigory turned back and lashed the horse with all his might. The road grew worse and worse every hour. Now he could not see the yoke at all. Now and then the sledge ran into a young fir tree, a dark object scratched the turner's hands and flashed before his eyes, and the field of vision was white and whirling again.

"To live over again," thought the turner.

He remembered that forty years ago Matryona had been young, handsome, merry, that she had come of a well-to-do family. They had married her to him because they had been attracted by his handicraft. All the essentials for a happy life had been there, but the trouble was that, just as he had got drunk after the wedding and lay sprawling on the stove, so he had gone on without waking up till now. His wedding he remembered, but of what happened after the wedding—for the life of him he could remember nothing, except perhaps that he had drunk, lain on the stove, and quarreled. Forty years had been wasted like that.

The white clouds of snow were beginning little by little to turn gray. It was getting dusk.

"Where am I going?" the turner suddenly bethought him with a start. "I ought to be thinking of the burial, and I am on the way to the hospital. . . . It is as though I had gone crazy!"

Grigory turned round again, and again lashed his horse. The little nag strained its utmost and, with a snort, fell into a little trot. The turner lashed it on the back time after time. . . . A knocking was audible behind him, and though he did not look round, he knew it was the dead woman's head knocking against the sledge. And the snow kept turning darker and darker, the wind grew colder and more cutting. . . .

"To live over again!" thought the turner. "I should get a new lathe, take orders, . . . give the money to my old woman. . . ."

And then he dropped the reins. He looked for them, tried to pick them up, but could not—his hands would not work. . . .

"It does not matter," he thought, "the horse will go of itself, it knows the way. I might have a little sleep now. . . . Before the funeral or the requiem it would be as well to get a little rest. . . ."

The turner closed his eyes and dozed. A little later he heard the horse stop; he opened his eyes and saw before him something dark like a hut or a haystack. . . .

He would have got out of the sledge and found out what it was, but he felt overcome by such inertia that it seemed better to freeze than move, and he sank into a peaceful sleep.

He woke up in a big room with painted walls. Bright sunlight was streaming in at the windows. The turner saw people facing him, and his first feeling was a desire to show himself a respectable man who knew how things should be done.

"A requiem, brothers, for my old woman," he said. "The priest should be told. . . ."

"Oh, all right, all right; lie down," a voice cut him short.

"Pavel Ivanitch!" the turner cried in surprise, seeing the doctor before him. "Your honor, benefactor!"

He wanted to leap up and fall on his knees before the doctor, but felt that his arms and legs would not obey him.

"Your honor, where are my legs, where are my arms!"

"Say good-by to your arms and legs. . . . They've been frozen off. Come, come! . . . What are you crying for? You've lived your life, and thank God for it! I suppose you have had sixty years of it—that's enough for you! . . ."

"I am grieving. . . . Graciously forgive me! If I could have another five or six years! . . ."

"What for?"

"The horse isn't mine, I must give it back. . . . I must bury my old woman. . . . How quickly it is all ended in this world! Your honor, Pavel Ivanitch! A cigarette-case of birchwood of the best! I'll turn you croquet balls. . . ."

The doctor went out of the ward with a wave of his hand. It was all over with the turner.

MISERY

"To whom shall I tell my grief?"

THE twilight of evening. Big flakes of wet snow are whirling lazily about the street lamps, which have just been lighted, and lying in a thin soft layer on roofs, horses' backs, shoulders, caps. Iona Potapov, the sledge-driver, is all white like a ghost. He sits on the box without stirring, bent as double as the living body can be bent. If a regular snowdrift fell on him it seems as though even then he would not think it necessary to shake it off. . . . His little mare is white and motionless too. Her stillness, the angularity of her lines, and the stick-like straightness of her legs make her look like a halfpenny gingerbread horse. She is probably lost in thought. Anyone who has been torn away from the plough, from the familiar gray landscapes, and cast into this slough, full of monstrous lights, of unceasing uproar and hurrying people, is bound to think.

It is a long time since Iona and his nag have budged. They came out of the yard before dinner-time and not a single fare yet. But now the shades of evening are falling on the town. The pale light of the street lamps changes to a vivid color, and the bustle of the street grows noisier.

"Sledge to Vyborgskaya!" Iona hears. "Sledge!"

Iona starts, and through his snow-plastered eyelashes sees an officer in a military overcoat with a hood over his head.

"To Vyborgskaya," repeats the officer. "Are you asleep? To Vyborgskaya!"

In token of assent Iona gives a tug at the reins which sends

cakes of snow flying from the horse's back and shoulders. The officer gets into the sledge. The sledge-driver clicks to the horse, cranes his neck like a swan, rises in his seat, and more from habit than necessity brandishes his whip. The mare cranes her neck, too, crooks her stick-like legs, and hesitatingly sets off. . . .

"Where are you shoving, you devil?" Iona immediately hears shouts from the dark mass shifting to and fro before him. "Where the devil are you going? Keep to the r-right!"

"You don't know how to drive! Keep to the right," says the officer angrily.

A coachman driving a carriage swears at him; a pedestrian crossing the road and brushing the horse's nose with his shoulder looks at him angrily and shakes the snow off his sleeve. Iona fidgets on the box as though he were sitting on thorns, jerks his elbows, and turns his eyes about like one possessed, as though he did not know where he was or why he was there.

"What rascals they all are!" says the officer jocosely. "They are simply doing their best to run up against you or fall under the horse's feet. They must be doing it on purpose."

Iona looks at his fare and moves his lips. . . . Apparently he means to say something, but nothing comes but a sniff.

"What?" inquires the officer.

Iona gives a wry smile, and straining his throat, brings out huskily: "My son . . . er . . . my son died this week, sir."

"H'm! What did he die of?"

Iona turns his whole body round to his fare, and says:

"Who can tell! It must have been from fever. . . . He lay three days in the hospital and then he died. . . . God's will."

"Turn round, you devil!" comes out of the darkness. "Have you gone cracked, you old dog? Look where you are going!"

"Drive on! drive on! . . ." says the officer. "We shan't get there till to-morrow going on like this. Hurry up!"

The sledge-driver cranes his neck again, rises in his seat, and with heavy grace swings his whip. Several times he looks round at the officer, but the latter keeps his eyes shut and is

apparently disinclined to listen. Putting his fare down at Vyborgskaya, Iona stops by a restaurant, and again sits huddled up on the box. . . . Again the wet snow paints him and his horse white. One hour passes, and then another. . . .

Three young men, two tall and thin, one short and hunchbacked, come up, railing at each other and loudly stamping on the pavement with their goloshes.

"Cabby, to the Police Bridge!" the hunchback cries in a cracked voice. "The three of us, . . . twenty kopecks!"

Iona tugs at the reins and clicks to his horse. Twenty kopecks is not a fair price, but he has no thoughts for that. Whether it is a rouble or whether it is five kopecks does not matter to him now so long as he has a fare. . . . The three young men, shoving each other and using bad language, go up to the sledge, and all three try to sit down at once. The question remains to be settled: Which are to sit down and which one is to stand? After a long altercation, ill-temper, and abuse, they come to the conclusion that the hunchback must stand because he is the shortest.

"Well, drive on," says the hunchback in his cracked voice, settling himself and breathing down Iona's neck. "Cut along! What a cap you've got, my friend! You wouldn't find a worse one in all Petersburg. . . ."

"He-he! . . . he-he! . . ." laughs Iona. "It's nothing to boast of!"

"Well, then, nothing to boast of, drive on! Are you going to drive like this all the way? Eh? Shall I give you one in the neck?"

"My head aches," says one of the tall ones. "At the Dukmasovs' yesterday Vaska and I drank four bottles of brandy between us."

"I can't make out why you talk such stuff," says the other tall one angrily. "You lie like a brute."

"Strike me dead, it's the truth!"

"It's about as true as that a louse coughs."

"He-he!" grins Iona. "Me-er-ry gentlemen!"

"Tfoo! the devil take you!" cries the hunchback indignantly.

"Will you get on, you old plague, or won't you? Is that the way to drive? Give her one with the whip. Hang it all, give it her well."

Iona feels behind his back the jolting person and quivering voice of the hunchback. He hears abuse addressed to him, he sees people, and the feeling of loneliness begins little by little to be less heavy on his heart. The hunchback swears at him, till he chokes over some elaborately whimsical string of epithets and is overpowered by his cough. His tall companions begin talking of a certain Nadyezhda Petrovna. Iona looks round at them. Waiting till there is a brief pause, he looks round once more and says:

"This week . . . er . . . my . . . er . . . son died!"

"We shall all die, . . ." says the hunchback with a sigh, wiping his lips after coughing. "Come, drive on! drive on! My friends, I simply cannot stand crawling like this! When will he get us there?"

"Well, you give him a little encouragement . . . one in the neck!"

"Do you hear, you old plague? I'll make you smart. If one stands on ceremony with fellows like you one may as well walk. Do you hear, you old dragon? Or don't you care a hang what we say?"

And Iona hears rather than feels a slap on the back of his neck.

"He-he! . . ." he laughs. "Merry gentlemen. . . . God give you health!"

"Cabman, are you married?" asks one of the tall ones.

"I? He-he! Me-er-ry gentlemen. The only wife for me now is the damp earth. . . . He-ho-ho! . . . The grave that is! . . . Here my son's dead and I am alive. . . . It's a strange thing, death has come in at the wrong door. . . . Instead of coming for me it went for my son. . . ."

And Iona turns round to tell them how his son died, but at that point the hunchback gives a faint sigh and announces that, thank God! they have arrived at last. After taking his twenty kopecks, Iona gazes for a long while after the revelers, who

disappear into a dark entry. Again he is alone and again there is silence for him. . . . The misery which has been for a brief space eased comes back again and tears his heart more cruelly than ever. With a look of anxiety and suffering Iona's eyes stray restlessly among the crowds moving to and fro on both sides of the street: can he not find among those thousands someone who will listen to him? But the crowds flit by heedless of him and his misery. . . . His misery is immense, beyond all bounds. If Iona's heart were to burst and his misery to flow out, it would flood the whole world, it seems, but yet it is not seen. It has found a hiding-place in such an insignificant shell that one would not have found it with a candle by daylight. . . .

Iona sees a house-porter with a parcel and makes up his mind to address him.

"What time will it be, friend?" he asks.

"Going on for ten. . . . Why have you stopped here? Drive on!"

Iona drives a few paces away, bends himself double, and gives himself up to his misery. He feels it is no good to appeal to people. But before five minutes have passed he draws himself up, shakes his head as though he feels a sharp pain, and tugs at the reins. . . . He can bear it no longer.

"Back to the yard!" he thinks. "To the yard!"

And his little mare, as though she knew his thoughts, falls to trotting. An hour and a half later Iona is sitting by a big dirty stove. On the stove, on the floor, and on the benches are people snoring. The air is full of smells and stuffiness. Iona looks at the sleeping figures, scratches himself, and regrets that he has come home so early. . . .

"I have not earned enough to pay for the oats, even," he thinks. "That's why I am so miserable. A man who knows how to do his work, . . . who has had enough to eat, and whose horse has had enough to eat, is always at ease. . . ."

In one of the corners a young cabman gets up, clears his throat sleepily, and makes for the water-bucket.

"Want a drink?" Iona asks him.

"Seems so."

"May it do you good. . . . But my son is dead, mate. . . . Do you hear? This week in the hospital. . . . It's a queer business. . . ."

Iona looks to see the effect produced by his words, but he sees nothing. The young man has covered his head and is already asleep. The old man sighs and scratches himself. . . . Just as the young man had been thirsty for water, he thirsts for speech. His son will soon have been dead a week, and he has not really talked to anybody yet. . . . He wants to talk of it properly, with deliberation. . . . He wants to tell how his son was taken ill, how he suffered, what he said before he died, how he died. . . . He wants to describe the funeral, and how he went to the hospital to get his son's clothes. He still has his daughter Anisya in the country. . . . And he wants to talk about her too. . . . Yes, he has plenty to talk about now. His listener ought to sigh and exclaim and lament. . . . It would be even better to talk to women. Though they are silly creatures, they blubber at the first word.

"Let's go out and have a look at the mare," Iona thinks. "There is always time for sleep. . . . You'll have sleep enough, no fear. . . ."

He puts on his coat and goes into the stables where his mare is standing. He thinks about oats, about hay, about the weather. . . . He cannot think about his son when he is alone. . . . To talk about him with someone is possible, but to think of him and picture him is insufferable anguish. . . .

"Are you munching?" Iona asks his mare, seeing her shining eyes. "There, munch away, munch away. . . . Since we have not earned enough for oats, we will eat hay. . . . Yes, . . . I have grown too old to drive. . . . My son ought to be driving, not I. . . . He was a real cabman. . . . He ought to have lived. . . ."

Iona is silent for a while, and then he goes on:

"That's how it is, old girl. . . . Kuzma Ionitch is gone. . . . He said good-by to me. . . . He went and died for no reason. . . . Now, suppose you had a little colt, and you were

own mother to that little colt. . . . And all at once that same little colt went and died. . . . You'd be sorry, wouldn't you? . . ."

The little mare munches, listens, and breathes on her master's hands. Iona is carried away and tells her all about it.

THE DEPENDENTS

Mihail Petrovitch Zotov, a decrepit and solitary old man of seventy, belonging to the artisan class, was awakened by the cold and the aching in his old limbs. It was dark in his room, but the little lamp before the ikon was no longer burning. Zotov raised the curtain and looked out of the window. The clouds that shrouded the sky were beginning to show white here and there, and the air was becoming transparent, so it must have been nearly five, not more.

Zotov cleared his throat, coughed, and shrinking from the cold, got out of bed. In accordance with years of habit, he stood for a long time before the ikon, saying his prayers. He repeated "Our Father," "Hail Mary," the Creed, and mentioned a long string of names. To whom those names belonged he had forgotten years ago, and he only repeated them from habit. From habit, too, he swept his room and entry, and set his fat little four-legged copper samovar. If Zotov had not had these habits he would not have known how to occupy his old age.

The little samovar slowly began to get hot, and all at once, unexpectedly, broke into a tremulous bass hum.

"Oh, you've started humming!" grumbled Zotov. "Hum away then, and bad luck to you!"

At that point the old man appropriately recalled that, in the preceding night, he had dreamed of a stove, and to dream of a stove is a sign of sorrow.

Dreams and omens were the only things left that could rouse him to reflection; and on this occasion he plunged with a special zest into the considerations of the questions: What the samovar was humming for? and what sorrow was foretold by the stove? The dream seemed to come true from the first.

Zotov rinsed out his teapot and was about to make his tea, when he found there was not one teaspoonful left in the box.

"What an existence!" he grumbled, rolling crumbs of black bread round in his mouth. "It's a dog's life. No tea! And it isn't as though I were a simple peasant: I'm an artisan and a house-owner. The disgrace!"

Grumbling and talking to himself, Zotov put on his overcoat, which was like a crinoline, and, thrusting his feet into huge clumsy golosh-boots (made in the year 1867 by a bootmaker called Prohoritch), went out into the yard. The air was grey, cold, and sullenly still. The big yard, full of tufts of burdock and strewn with yellow leaves, was faintly silvered with autumn frost. Not a breath of wind nor a sound. The old man sat down on the steps of his slanting porch, and at once there happened what happened regularly every morning: his dog Lyska, a big, mangy, decrepit-looking, white yard-dog, with black patches, came up to him with its right eye shut. Lyska came up timidly, wriggling in a frightened way, as though her paws were not touching the earth but a hot stove, and the whole of her wretched figure was expressive of abjectness. Zotov pretended not to notice her, but when she faintly wagged her tail, and, wriggling as before, licked his golosh, he stamped his foot angrily.

"Be off! The plague take you!" he cried. "Con-found-ed bea-east!"

Lyska moved aside, sat down, and fixed her solitary eye upon her master.

"You devils!" he went on. "You are the last straw on my back, you Herods."

And he looked with hatred at his shed with its crooked, overgrown roof; there from the door of the shed a big horse's head was looking out at him. Probably flattered by its master's attention, the head moved, pushed forward, and there emerged from the shed the whole horse, as decrepit as Lyska, as timid and as crushed, with spindly legs, grey hair, a pinched stomach, and a bony spine. He came out of the shed and stood still, hesitating as though overcome with embarrassment.

"Plague take you," Zotov went on. "Shall I ever see the last of you, you jail-bird Pharaohs! . . . I wager you want your breakfast!" he jeered, twisting his angry face into a contemptuous smile. "By all means, this minute! A priceless steed like you must have your fill of the best oats! Pray begin! This minute! And I have something to give to the magnificent, valuable dog! If a precious dog like you does not care for bread, you can have meat."

Zotov grumbled for half an hour, growing more and more irritated. In the end, unable to control the anger that boiled up in him, he jumped up, stamped with his goloshes, and growled out to be heard all over the yard:

"I am not obliged to feed you, you loafers! I am not some millionaire for you to eat out of house and home! I have nothing to eat myself, you cursed carcases, the cholera take you! I get no pleasure or profit out of you; nothing but trouble and ruin. Why don't you give up the ghost? Are you such personages that even death won't take you? You can live, damn you! but I don't want to feed you! I have had enough of you! I don't want to!"

Zotov grew wrathful and indignant, and the horse and the dog listened. Whether these two dependents understood that they were being reproached for living at his expense, I don't know, but their stomachs looked more pinched than ever, and their whole figures shrivelled up, grew gloomier and more abject than before. . . . Their submissive air exasperated Zotov more than ever.

"Get away!" he shouted, overcome by a sort of inspiration. "Out of my house! Don't let me set eyes on you again! I am not obliged to keep all sorts of rubbish in my yard! Get away!"

The old man moved with little hurried steps to the gate, opened it, and picking up a stick from the ground, began driving out his dependents. The horse shook its head, moved its shoulder-blades, and limped to the gate; the dog followed him. Both of them went out into the street, and after walking some twenty paces, stopped at the fence.

"I'll give it you!" Zotov threatened them.

When he had driven out his dependents he felt calmer, and began sweeping the yard. From time to time he peeped out into the street: the horse and the dog were standing like posts by the fence, looking dejectedly towards the gate.

"Try how you can do without me," muttered the old man, feeling as though a weight of anger were being lifted from his heart. "Let somebody else look after you now! I am stingy and ill-tempered. . . . It's nasty living with me, so you try living with other people. . . . Yes. . . ."

After enjoying the crushed expression of his dependents, and grumbling to his heart's content, Zotov went out of the yard, and, assuming a ferocious air, shouted:

"Well, why are you standing there? Whom are you waiting for? Standing right across the middle of the road and preventing the public from passing! Go into the yard!"

The horse and the dog with drooping heads and a guilty air turned towards the gate. Lyska, probably feeling she did not deserve forgiveness, whined piteously.

"Stay you can, but as for food, you'll get nothing from me! You may die, for all I care!"

Meanwhile the sun began to break through the morning mist; its slanting rays gilded over the autumn frost. There was a sound of steps and voices. Zotov put back the broom in its place, and went out of the yard to see his crony and neighbour, Mark Ivanitch, who kept a little general shop. On reaching his friend's shop, he sat down on a folding-stool, sighed sedately, stroked his beard, and began about the weather. From the weather the friends passed to the new deacon, from the deacon to the choristers; and the conversation lengthened out. They did not notice as they talked how time was passing, and when the shop-boy brought in a big teapot of boiling water, and the friends proceeded to drink tea, the time flew as quickly as a bird. Zotov got warm and felt more cheerful.

"I have a favour to ask of you, Mark Ivanitch," he began, after the sixth glass, drumming on the counter with his fingers.

"If you would just . . . be so kind as to give me a gallon of oats again to-day. . . ."

From behind the big tea-chest behind which Mark Ivanitch was sitting came the sound of a deep sigh.

"Do be so good," Zotov went on; "never mind tea—don't give it me to-day, but let me have some oats. . . . I am ashamed to ask you, I have wearied you with my poverty, but the horse is hungry."

"I can give it you," sighed the friend—"why not? But why the devil do you keep those carcases? Tell me that, please. It would be all right if it were a useful horse, but—tfoo!—one is ashamed to look at it. . . . And the dog's nothing but a skeleton! Why the devil do you keep them?"

"What am I to do with them?"

"You know. Take them to Ignat the slaughterer—that is all there is to do. They ought to have been there long ago. It's the proper place for them."

"To be sure, that is so! . . . I dare say! . . ."

"You live like a beggar and keep animals," the friend went on. "I don't grudge the oats. . . . God bless you. But as to the future, brother . . . I can't afford to give regularly every day! There is no end to your poverty! One gives and gives, and one doesn't know when there will be an end to it all."

The friend sighed and stroked his red face.

"If you were dead that would settle it," he said. "You go on living, and you don't know what for. . . . Yes, indeed! But if it is not the Lord's will for you to die, you had better go somewhere into an almshouse or a refuge."

"What for? I have relations. I have a great-niece. . . ."

And Zotov began telling at great length of his great-niece Glasha, daughter of his niece Katerina, who lived somewhere on a farm.

"She is bound to keep me!" he said. "My house will be left to her, so let her keep me; I'll go to her. It's Glasha, you know . . . Katya's daughter; and Katya, you know, was my

brother Panteley's stepdaughter. . . . You understand? The house will come to her. . . . Let her keep me!"

"To be sure; rather than live, as you do, a beggar, I should have gone to her long ago."

"I will go! As God's above, I will go. It's her duty."

When an hour later the old friends were drinking a glass of vodka, Zotov stood in the middle of the shop and said with enthusiasm:

"I have been meaning to go to her for a long time; I will go this very day."

"To be sure; rather than hanging about and dying of hunger, you ought to have gone to the farm long ago."

"I'll go at once! When I get there, I shall say: Take my house, but keep me and treat me with respect. It's your duty! If you don't care to, then there is neither my house, nor my blessing for you! Good-bye, Ivanitch!"

Zotov drank another glass, and, inspired by the new idea, hurried home. The vodka had upset him and his head was reeling, but instead of lying down, he put all his clothes together in a bundle, said a prayer, took his stick, and went out. Muttering and tapping on the stones with his stick, he walked the whole length of the street without looking back, and found himself in the open country. It was eight or nine miles to the farm. He walked along the dry road, looked at the town herd lazily munching the yellow grass, and pondered on the abrupt change in his life which he had only just brought about so resolutely. He thought, too, about his dependents. When he went out of the house, he had not locked the gate, and so had left them free to go whither they would.

He had not gone a mile into the country when he heard steps behind him. He looked round and angrily clasped his hands. The horse and Lyska, with their heads drooping and their tails between their legs, were quietly walking after him.

"Go back!" he waved to them.

They stopped, looked at one another, looked at him. He went on, they followed him. Then he stopped and began

ruminating. It was impossible to go to his great-niece Glasha, whom he hardly knew, with these creatures; he did not want to go back and shut them up, and, indeed, he could not shut them up, because the gate was no use.

"To die of hunger in the shed," thought Zotov. "Hadn't I really better take them to Ignat?"

Ignat's hut stood on the town pasture-ground, a hundred paces from the flagstaff. Though he had not quite made up his mind, and did not know what to do, he turned towards it. His head was giddy and there was a darkness before his eyes. . . .

He remembers little of what happened in the slaughterer's yard. He has a memory of a sickening, heavy smell of hides and the savoury steam of the cabbage-soup Ignat was sipping when he went in to him. As in a dream he saw Ignat, who made him wait two hours, slowly preparing something, changing his clothes, talking to some women about corrosive sublimate; he remembered the horse was put into a stand, after which there was the sound of two dull thuds, one of a blow on the skull, the other of the fall of a heavy body. When Lyska, seeing the death of her friend, flew at Ignat, barking shrilly, there was the sound of a third blow that cut short the bark abruptly. Further, Zotov remembers that in his drunken foolishness, seeing the two corpses, he went up to the stand, and put his own forehead ready for a blow.

And all that day his eyes were dimmed by a haze, and he could not see his own fingers.

THE LETTER

The clerical superintendent of the district, his Reverence Father Fyodor Orlov, a handsome, well-nourished man of fifty, grave and important as he always was, with an habitual expression of dignity that never left his face, was walking to and fro in his little drawing-room, extremely exhausted, and thinking intensely about the same thing: "When would his visitor go?" The thought worried him and did not leave him for a minute. The visitor, Father Anastasy, the priest of one of the villages near the town, had come to him three hours before on some very unpleasant and dreary business of his own, had stayed on and on, was now sitting in the corner at a little round table with his elbow on a thick account book, and apparently had no thought of going, though it was getting on for nine o'clock in the evening.

Not everyone knows when to be silent and when to go. It not infrequently happens that even diplomatic persons of good worldly breeding fail to observe that their presence is arousing a feeling akin to hatred in their exhausted or busy host, and that this feeling is being concealed with an effort and disguised with a lie. But Father Anastasy perceived it clearly, and realized that his presence was burdensome and inappropriate, that his Reverence, who had taken an early morning service in the night and a long mass at midday, was exhausted and longing for repose; every minute he was meaning to get up and go, but he did not get up, he sat on as though he were waiting for something. He was an old man of sixty-five, prematurely aged, with a bent and bony figure, with a sunken face and the dark skin of old age, with red eyelids and a long

narrow back like a fish's; he was dressed in a smart cassock of a light lilac colour, but too big for him (presented to him by the widow of a young priest lately deceased), a full cloth coat with a broad leather belt, and clumsy high boots the size and hue of which showed clearly that Father Anastasy dispensed with goloshes. In spite of his position and his venerable age, there was something pitiful, crushed and humiliated in his lustreless red eyes, in the strands of grey hair with a shade of green in it on the nape of his neck, and in the big shoulder-blades on his lean back. . . . He sat without speaking or moving, and coughed with circumspection, as though afraid that the sound of his coughing might make his presence more noticeable.

The old man had come to see his Reverence on business. Two months before he had been prohibited from officiating till further notice, and his case was being inquired into. His shortcomings were numerous. He was intemperate in his habits, fell out with the other clergy and the commune, kept the church records and accounts carelessly—these were the formal charges against him; but besides all that, there had been rumours for a long time past that he celebrated unlawful marriages for money and sold certificates of having fasted and taken the sacrament to officials and officers who came to him from the town. These rumours were maintained the more persistently that he was poor and had nine children to keep, who were as incompetent and unsuccessful as himself. The sons were spoilt and uneducated, and stayed at home doing nothing, while the daughters were ugly and did not get married.

Not having the moral force to be open, his Reverence walked up and down the room and said nothing or spoke in hints.

"So you are not going home to-night?" he asked, stopping near the dark window and poking with his little finger into the cage where a canary was asleep with its feathers puffed out.

Father Anastasy started, coughed cautiously and said rapidly:

"Home? I don't care to, Fyodor Ilyitch. I cannot officiate,

as you know, so what am I to do there? I came away on purpose that I might not have to look the people in the face. One is ashamed not to officiate, as you know. Besides, I have business here, Fyodor Ilyitch. To-morrow after breaking the fast I want to talk things over thoroughly with the Father charged with the inquiry."

"Ah! . . ." yawned his Reverence, "and where are you staying?"

"At Zyavkin's."

Father Anastasy suddenly remembered that within two hours his Reverence had to take the Easter-night service, and he felt so ashamed of his unwelcome burdensome presence that he made up his mind to go away at once and let the exhausted man rest. And the old man got up to go. But before he began saying good-bye he stood clearing his throat for a minute and looking searchingly at his Reverence's back, still with the same expression of vague expectation in his whole figure; his face was working with shame, timidity, and a pitiful forced laugh such as one sees in people who do not respect themselves. Waving his hand as it were resolutely, he said with a husky quavering laugh:

"Father Fyodor, do me one more kindness: bid them give me at leave-taking . . . one little glass of vodka."

"It's not the time to drink vodka now," said his Reverence sternly. "One must have some regard for decency."

Father Anastasy was still more overwhelmed by confusion; he laughed, and, forgetting his resolution to go away, dropped back on his chair. His Reverence looked at his helpless, embarrassed face and his bent figure and he felt sorry for the old man.

"Please God, we will have a drink to-morrow," he said, wishing to soften his stern refusal. "Everything is good in due season."

His Reverence believed in people's reforming, but now when a feeling of pity had been kindled in him it seemed to him that this disgraced, worn-out old man, entangled in a network of sins and weaknesses, was hopelessly wrecked, that there was no

power on earth that could straighten out his spine, give brightness to his eyes and restrain the unpleasant timid laugh which he laughed on purpose to smooth over to some slight extent the repulsive impression he made on people.

The old man seemed now to Father Fyodor not guilty and not vicious, but humiliated, insulted, unfortunate; his Reverence thought of his wife, his nine children, the dirty beggarly shelter at Zyavkin's; he thought for some reason of the people who are glad to see priests drunk and persons in authority detected in crimes; and thought that the very best thing Father Anastasy could do now would be to die as soon as possible and to depart from this world for ever.

There was a sound of footsteps.

"Father Fyodor, you are not resting?" a bass voice asked from the passage.

"No, deacon; come in."

Orlov's colleague, the deacon Liubimov, an elderly man with a big bald patch on the top of his head, though his hair was still black and he was still vigorous-looking with thick black eyebrows like a Georgian's, walked in. He bowed to Father Anastasy and sat down.

"What good news have you?" asked his Reverence.

"What good news?" answered the deacon, and after a pause he went on with a smile: "When your children are little, your trouble is small; when your children are big, your trouble is great. Such goings on, Father Fyodor, that I don't know what to think of it. It's a regular farce, that's what it is."

He paused again for a little, smiled still more broadly and said:

"Nikolay Matveyitch came back from Harkov to-day. He has been telling me about my Pyotr. He has been to see him twice, he tells me."

"What has he been telling you, then?"

"He has upset me, God bless him. He meant to please me, but when I came to think it over, it seems there is not much to be pleased at. I ought to grieve rather than be pleased. . . . 'Your Petrushka,' said he, 'lives in fine style. He is far above

us now,' said he. 'Well, thank God for that,' said I. 'I dined with him,' said he, 'and saw his whole manner of life. He lives like a gentleman,' he said; 'you couldn't wish to live better.' I was naturally interested and I asked, 'And what did you have for dinner?' 'First,' he said, 'a fish course something like fish soup, then tongue and peas,' and then he said, 'roast turkey.' 'Turkey in Lent? that is something to please me,' said I. 'Turkey in Lent? Eh?' "

"Nothing marvellous in that," said his Reverence, screwing up his eyes ironically. And sticking both thumbs in his belt, he drew himself up and said in the tone in which he usually delivered discourses or gave his Scripture lessons to the pupils in the district school: "People who do not keep the fasts are divided into two different categories: some do not keep them through laxity, others through infidelity. Your Pyotr does not keep them through infidelity. Yes."

The deacon looked timidly at Father Fyodor's stern face and said:

"There is worse to follow. . . . We talked and discussed one thing and another, and it turned out that my infidel of a son is living with some madame, another man's wife. She takes the place of wife and hostess in his flat, pours out the tea, receives visitors and all the rest of it, as though she were his lawful wife. For over two years he has been keeping up this dance with this viper. It's a regular farce. They have been living together three years and no children."

"I suppose they have been living in chastity!" chuckled Father Anastasy, coughing huskily. "There are children, Father Deacon—there are, but they don't keep them at home! They send them to the Foundling! He-he-he! . . ." Anastasy went on coughing till he choked.

"Don't interfere, Father Anastasy," said his Reverence sternly.

"Nikolay Matveyitch asked him, 'What madame is this helping the soup at your table?' " the deacon went on, gloomily scanning Anastasy's bent figure. " 'That is my wife,' said he. 'When was your wedding?' Nikolay Matveyitch asked him,

and Pyotr answered, 'We were married at Kulikov's restaurant.'"

His Reverence's eyes flashed wrathfully and the colour came into his temples. Apart from his sinfulness, Pyotr was not a person he liked. Father Fyodor had, as they say, a grudge against him. He remembered him a boy at school—he remembered him distinctly, because even then the boy had seemed to him not normal. As a schoolboy, Petrusha had been ashamed to serve at the altar, had been offended at being addressed without ceremony, had not crossed himself on entering the room, and what was still more noteworthy, was fond of talking a great deal and with heat—and, in Father Fyodor's opinion, much talking was unseemly in children and pernicious to them; moreover Petrusha had taken up a contemptuous and critical attitude to fishing, a pursuit to which both his Reverence and the deacon were greatly addicted. As a student Pyotr had not gone to church at all, had slept till midday, had looked down on people, and had been given to raising delicate and insoluble questions with a peculiarly provoking zest.

"What would you have?" his Reverence asked, going up to the deacon and looking at him angrily. "What would you have? This was to be expected! I always knew and was convinced that nothing good would come of your Pyotr! I told you so, and I tell you so now. What you have sown, that now you must reap! Reap it!"

"But what have I sown, Father Fyodor?" the deacon asked softly, looking up at his Reverence.

"Why, who is to blame if not you? You're his father, he is your offspring! You ought to have admonished him, have instilled the fear of God into him. A child must be taught! You have brought him into the world, but you haven't trained him up in the right way. It's a sin! It's wrong! It's a shame!"

His Reverence forgot his exhaustion, paced to and fro and went on talking. Drops of perspiration came out on the deacon's bald head and forehead. He raised his eyes to his Reverence with a look of guilt, and said:

"But didn't I train him, Father Fyodor? Lord have mercy on us, haven't I been a father to my children? You know yourself I spared nothing for his good; I have prayed and done my best all my life to give him a thorough education. He went to the high school and I got him tutors, and he took his degree at the University. And as to my not being able to influence his mind, Father Fyodor, why, you can judge for yourself that I am not qualified to do so! Sometimes when he used to come here as a student, I would begin admonishing him in my way, and he wouldn't heed me. I'd say to him, 'Go to church,' and he would answer, 'What for?' I would begin explaining, and he would say, 'Why? what for?' Or he would slap me on the shoulder and say, 'Everything in this world is relative, approximate and conditional. I don't know anything, and you don't know anything either, dad.' "

Father Anastasy laughed huskily, cleared his throat and waved his fingers in the air as though preparing to say something. His Reverence glanced at him and said sternly:

"Don't interfere, Father Anastasy."

The old man laughed, beamed, and evidently listened with pleasure to the deacon as though he were glad there were other sinful persons in this world besides himself. The deacon spoke sincerely, with an aching heart, and tears actually came into his eyes. Father Fyodor felt sorry for him.

"You are to blame, deacon, you are to blame," he said, but not so sternly and heatedly as before. "If you could beget him, you ought to know how to instruct him. You ought to have trained him in his childhood; it's no good trying to correct a student."

A silence followed; the deacon clasped his hands and said with a sigh:

"But you know I shall have to answer for him!"

"To be sure you will!"

After a brief silence his Reverence yawned and sighed at the same moment and asked:

"Who is reading the 'Acts'?"

"Yevstrat. Yevstrat always reads them."

The deacon got up and, looking imploringly at his Reverence, asked:

"Father Fyodor, what am I to do now?"

"Do as you please; you are his father, not I. You ought to know best."

"I don't know anything, Father Fyodor! Tell me what to do, for goodness' sake! Would you believe it, I am sick at heart! I can't sleep now, nor keep quiet, and the holiday will be no holiday to me. Tell me what to do, Father Fyodor!"

"Write him a letter."

"What am I to write to him?"

"Write that he mustn't go on like that. Write shortly, but sternly and circumstantially, without softening or smoothing away his guilt. It is your parental duty; if you write, you will have done your duty and will be at peace."

"That's true. But what am I to write to him, to what effect? If I write to him, he will answer, 'Why? what for? Why is it a sin?'"

Father Anastasy laughed hoarsely again, and brandished his fingers.

"Why? what for? why is it a sin?" he began shrilly. "I was once confessing a gentleman, and I told him that excessive confidence in the Divine Mercy is a sin; and he asked, 'Why?' I tried to answer him, but——" Anastasy slapped himself on the forehead. "I had nothing here. He-he-he-he! . . ."

Anastasy's words, his hoarse jangling laugh at what was not laughable, had an unpleasant effect on his Reverence and on the deacon. The former was on the point of saying, "Don't interfere" again, but he did not say it, he only frowned.

"I can't write to him," sighed the deacon.

"If you can't, who can?"

"Father Fyodor!" said the deacon, putting his head on one side and pressing his hand to his heart. "I am an uneducated slow-witted man, while the Lord has vouchsafed you judgment and wisdom. You know everything and understand everything. You can master anything, while I don't know how to put my words together sensibly. Be generous. Instruct

me how to write the letter. Teach me what to say and how to say it. . . ."

"What is there to teach? There is nothing to teach. Sit down and write."

"Oh, do me the favour, Father Fyodor! I beseech you! I know he will be frightened and will attend to your letter, because, you see, you are a cultivated man too. Do be so good! I'll sit down, and you'll dictate to me. It will be a sin to write to-morrow, but now would be the very time; my mind would be set at rest."

His Reverence looked at the deacon's imploring face, thought of the disagreeable Pyotr, and consented to dictate. He made the deacon sit down to his table and began.

"Well, write . . . 'Christ is risen, dear son . . .' exclamation mark. 'Rumours have reached me, your father,' then in parenthesis, 'from what source is no concern of yours . . .' close the parenthesis. . . . Have you written it? 'that you are leading a life inconsistent with the laws both of God and of man. Neither the luxurious comfort, nor the worldly splendour, nor the culture with which you seek outwardly to disguise it, can hide your heathen manner of life. In name you are a Christian, but in your real nature a heathen as pitiful and wretched as all other heathens—more wretched, indeed, seeing that those heathens who know not Christ are lost from ignorance, while you are lost in that, possessing a treasure, you neglect it. I will not enumerate here your vices, which you know well enough; I will say that I see the cause of your ruin in your infidelity. You imagine yourself to be wise, boast of your knowledge of science, but refuse to see that science without faith, far from elevating a man, actually degrades him to the level of a lower animal, inasmuch as . . .'" The whole letter was in this strain.

When he had finished writing it the deacon read it aloud, beamed all over and jumped up.

"It's a gift, it's really a gift!" he said, clasping his hands and looking enthusiastically at his Reverence. "To think of the Lord's bestowing a gift like that! Eh? Holy Mother!

I do believe I couldn't write a letter like that in a hundred years. Lord save you!"

Father Anastasy was enthusiastic too.

"One couldn't write like that without a gift," he said, getting up and wagging his fingers—"that one couldn't! His rhetoric would trip any philosopher and shut him up. Intellect! Brilliant intellect! If you weren't married, Father Fyodor, you would have been a bishop long ago, you would really!"

Having vented his wrath in a letter, his Reverence felt relieved; his fatigue and exhaustion came back to him. The deacon was an old friend, and his Reverence did not hesitate to say to him:

"Well, deacon, go, and God bless you. I'll have half an hour's nap on the sofa; I must rest."

The deacon went away and took Anastasy with him. As is always the case on Easter Eve, it was dark in the street, but the whole sky was sparkling with bright luminous stars. There was a scent of spring and holiday in the soft still air.

"How long was he dictating?" the deacon said admiringly. "Ten minutes, not more! It would have taken someone else a month to compose such a letter. Eh! What a mind! Such a mind that I don't know what to call it! It's a marvel! It's really a marvel!"

"Education!" sighed Anastasy as he crossed the muddy street, holding up his cassock to his waist. "It's not for us to compare ourselves with him. We come of the sacristan class, while he has had a learned education. Yes, he's a real man, there is no denying that."

"And you listen how he'll read the Gospel in Latin at mass to-day! He knows Latin and he knows Greek. . . . Ah, Petrushka, Petrushka!" the deacon said, suddenly remembering. "Now that will make him scratch his head! That will shut his mouth, that will bring it home to him! Now he won't ask 'Why.' It is a case of one wit to outwit another! Ha-ha-ha!"

The deacon laughed gaily and loudly. Since the letter had been written to Pyotr he had become serene and more cheerful.

The consciousness of having performed his duty as a father and his faith in the power of the letter had brought back his mirthfulness and good-humour.

"Pyotr means a stone," said he, as he went into his house. "My Pyotr is not a stone, but a rag. A viper has fastened upon him and he pampers her, and hasn't the pluck to kick her out. Tfoo! To think there should be women like that, God forgive me! Eh? Has she no shame? She has fastened upon the lad, sticking to him, and keeps him tied to her apron-strings. . . . Fie upon her!"

"Perhaps it's not she keeps hold of him, but he of her?"

"She is a shameless one anyway! Not that I am defending Pyotr. . . . He'll catch it. He'll read the letter and scratch his head! He'll burn with shame!"

"It's a splendid letter, only you know I wouldn't send it, Father Deacon. Let him alone."

"What!" said the deacon, disconcerted.

"Why. . . . Don't send it, deacon! What's the sense of it? Suppose you send it; he reads it, and . . . and what then? You'll only upset him. Forgive him. Let him alone!"

The deacon looked in surprise at Anastasy's dark face, at his unbuttoned cassock, which looked in the dusk like wings, and shrugged his shoulders.

"How can I forgive him like that?" he asked. "Why, I shall have to answer for him to God!"

"Even so, forgive him all the same. Really! And God will forgive you for your kindness to him."

"But he is my son, isn't he? Ought I not to teach him?"

"Teach him? Of course—why not? You can teach him, but why call him a heathen? It will hurt his feelings, you know, deacon. . . ."

The deacon was a widower, and lived in a little house with three windows. His elder sister, an old maid, looked after his house for him, though she had three years before lost the use of her legs and was confined to her bed; he was afraid of her, obeyed her, and did nothing without her advice. Father Anastasy went in with him. Seeing the table already laid with

Easter cakes and red eggs, he began weeping for some reason, probably thinking of his own home, and to turn these tears into a jest, he at once laughed huskily.

"Yes, we shall soon be breaking the fast," he said. "Yes . . . it wouldn't come amiss, deacon, to have a little glass now. Can we? I'll drink it so that the old lady does not hear," he whispered, glancing sideways towards the door.

Without a word the deacon moved a decanter and wineglass towards him. He unfolded the letter and began reading it aloud. And now the letter pleased him just as much as when his Reverence had dictated it to him. He beamed with pleasure and wagged his head, as though he had been tasting something very sweet.

"A-ah, what a letter!" he said. "Petrushka has never dreamt of such a letter. It's just what he wants, something to throw him into a fever. . . ."

"Do you know, deacon, don't send it!" said Anastasy, pouring himself out a second glass of vodka as though unconsciously. "Forgive him; let him alone! I am telling you . . . what I really think. If his own father can't forgive him, who will forgive him? And so he'll live without forgiveness. Think, deacon: there will be plenty to chastise him without you; but you should look out for some who will show mercy to your son! I'll . . . I'll . . . have just one more. The last, old man. . . . Just sit down and write straight off to him, 'I forgive you, Pyotr!' He will under-sta-and! He will fe-el it! I understand it from myself, you see, old man . . . deacon, I mean. When I lived like other people, I hadn't much to trouble about, but now since I lost the image and semblance, there is only one thing I care about, that good people should forgive me. And, remember, too, it's not the righteous but sinners we must forgive. Why should you forgive your old woman if she is not sinful? No, you must forgive a man when he is a sad sight to look at . . . yes!"

Anastasy leaned his head on his fist and sank into thought.

"It's a terrible thing, deacon," he sighed, evidently struggling with the desire to take another glass—"a terrible thing! In

sin my mother bore me, in sin I have lived, in sin I shall die. . . . God forgive me, a sinner! I have gone astray, deacon! There is no salvation for me! And it's not as though I had gone astray in my life, but in old age—at death's door . . . I . . ."

The old man, with a hopeless gesture, drank off another glass, then got up and moved to another seat. The deacon, still keeping the letter in his hand, was walking up and down the room. He was thinking of his son. Displeasure, distress and anxiety no longer troubled him; all that had gone into the letter. Now he was simply picturing Pyotr; he imagined his face, he thought of past years when his son used to come to stay with him for the holidays. His thoughts were only of what was good, warm, touching, of which one might think for a whole lifetime without wearying. Longing for his son, he read the letter through once more and looked questioningly at Anastasy.

"Don't send it," said the latter, with a wave of his hand.

"No, I must send it anyway; I must . . . bring him to his senses a little, all the same. It's just as well. . . ."

The deacon took an envelope from the table, but before putting the letter into it he sat down to the table, smiled and added on his own account at the bottom of the letter:

"They have sent us a new inspector. He's much friskier than the old one. He's a great one for dancing and talking, and there's nothing he can't do, so that all the Govorovsky girls are crazy over him. Our military chief, Kostyrev, will soon get the sack too, they say. High time he did!" And very well pleased, without the faintest idea that with this postscript he had completely spoiled the stern letter, the deacon addressed the envelope and laid it in the most conspicuous place on the table.

GUSEV

I

It was getting dark; it would soon be night.

Gusev, a discharged soldier, sat up in his hammock and said in an undertone:

"I say, Pavel Ivanitch. A soldier at Sutchan told me: while they were sailing a big fish came into collision with their ship and stove a hole in it."

The nondescript individual whom he was addressing, and whom everyone in the ship's hospital called Pavel Ivanitch, was silent, as though he had not heard.

And again a stillness followed. . . . The wind frolicked with the rigging, the screw throbbed, the waves lashed, the hammocks creaked, but the ear had long ago become accustomed to these sounds, and it seemed that everything around was asleep and silent. It was dreary. The three invalids—two soldiers and a sailor—who had been playing cards all the day were asleep and talking in their dreams.

It seemed as though the ship were beginning to rock. The hammock slowly rose and fell under Gusev, as though it were heaving a sigh, and this was repeated once, twice, three times. . . . Something crashed on to the floor with a clang: it must have been a jug falling down.

"The wind has broken loose from its chain . . ." said Gusev, listening.

This time Pavel Ivanitch cleared his throat and answered irritably:

"One minute a vessel's running into a fish, the next, the wind's breaking loose from its chain. . . . Is the wind a beast that it can break loose from its chain?"

"That's how christened folk talk."

"They are as ignorant as you are then. . . . They say all sorts of things. One must keep a head on one's shoulders and use one's reason. You are a senseless creature."

Pavel Ivanitch was subject to sea-sickness. When the sea was rough he was usually ill-humoured, and the merest trifle would make him irritable. And in Gusev's opinion there was absolutely nothing to be vexed about. What was there strange or wonderful, for instance, in the fish or in the wind's breaking loose from its chain? Suppose the fish were as big as a mountain and its back were as hard as a sturgeon: and in the same way, supposing that away yonder at the end of the world there stood great stone walls and the fierce winds were chained up to the walls . . . if they had not broken loose, why did they tear about all over the sea like maniacs, and struggle to escape like dogs? If they were not chained up, what did become of them when it was calm?

Gusev pondered for a long time about fishes as big as a mountain and stout, rusty chains, then he began to feel dull and thought of his native place to which he was returning after five years' service in the East. He pictured an immense pond covered with snow. . . . On one side of the pond the red-brick building of the potteries with a tall chimney and clouds of black smoke; on the other side—a village. . . . His brother Alexey comes out in a sledge from the fifth yard from the end; behind him sits his little son Vanka in big felt over-boots, and his little girl Akulka, also in big felt boots. Alexey has been drinking, Vanka is laughing, Akulka's face he could not see, she had muffled herself up.

"You never know, he'll get the children frozen . . ." thought Gusev. "Lord send them sense and judgment that they may honour their father and mother and not be wiser than their parents."

"They want re-soleing," a delirious sailor says in a bass voice. "Yes, yes!"

Gusev's thoughts break off, and instead of a pond there suddenly appears apropos of nothing a huge bull's head without eyes, and the horse and sledge are not driving along, but are

whirling round and round in a cloud of smoke. But still he was glad he had seen his own folks. He held his breath from delight, shudders ran all over him, and his fingers twitched.

"The Lord let us meet again," he muttered feverishly, but he at once opened his eyes and sought in the darkness for water.

He drank and lay back, and again the sledge was moving, then again the bull's head without eyes, smoke, clouds. . . . And so on till daybreak.

II

The first outline visible in the darkness was a blue circle—the little round window; then little by little Gusev could distinguish his neighbour in the next hammock, Pavel Ivanitch. The man slept sitting up, as he could not breathe lying down. His face was grey, his nose was long and sharp, his eyes looked huge from the terrible thinness of his face, his temples were sunken, his beard was skimpy, his hair was long. . . . Looking at him you could not make out of what class he was, whether he were a gentleman, a merchant, or a peasant. Judging from his expression and his long hair he might have been a hermit or a lay brother in a monastery—but if one listened to what he said it seemed that he could not be a monk. He was worn out by his cough and his illness and by the stifling heat, and breathed with difficulty, moving his parched lips. Noticing that Gusev was looking at him he turned his face towards him and said:

"I begin to guess. . . . Yes. . . . I understand it all perfectly now."

"What do you understand, Pavel Ivanitch?"

"I'll tell you. . . . It has always seemed to me strange that terribly ill as you are you should be here in a steamer where it is so hot and stifling and we are always being tossed up and down, where, in fact, everything threatens you with death; now it is all clear to me. . . . Yes. . . . Your doctors put you on the steamer to get rid of you. They get sick of looking after poor brutes like you. . . . You don't pay them anything, they have a bother with you, and you damage

their records with your deaths—so, of course, you are brutes! It's not difficult to get rid of you. . . . All that is necessary is, in the first place, to have no conscience or humanity, and, secondly, to deceive the steamer authorities. The first condition need hardly be considered, in that respect we are artists; and one can always succeed in the second with a little practice. In a crowd of four hundred healthy soldiers and sailors half a dozen sick ones are not conspicuous; well, they drove you all on to the steamer, mixed you with the healthy ones, hurriedly counted you over, and in the confusion nothing amiss was noticed, and when the steamer had started they saw that there were paralytics and consumptives in the last stage lying about on the deck. . . ."

Gusev did not understand Pavel Ivanitch; but supposing he was being blamed, he said in self-defense:

"I lay on the deck because I had not the strength to stand; when we were unloaded from the barge on to the ship I caught a fearful chill."

"It's revolting," Pavel Ivanitch went on. "The worst of it is they know perfectly well that you can't last out the long journey, and yet they put you here. Supposing you get as far as the Indian Ocean, what then? It's horrible to think of it. . . . And that's their gratitude for your faithful, irreproachable service!"

Pavel Ivanitch's eyes looked angry; he frowned contemptuously and said, gasping:

"Those are the people who ought to be plucked in the newspapers till the feathers fly in all directions."

The two sick soldiers and the sailor were awake and already playing cards. The sailor was half reclining in his hammock, the soldiers were sitting near him on the floor in the most uncomfortable attitudes. One of the soldiers had his right arm in a sling, and the hand was swathed up in a regular bundle so that he held his cards under his right arm or in the crook of his elbow while he played with the left. The ship was rolling heavily. They could not stand up, nor drink tea, nor take their medicines.

"Were you an officer's servant?" Pavel Ivanitch asked Gusev.

"Yes, an officer's servant."

"My God, my God!" said Pavel Ivanitch, and he shook his head mournfully. "To tear a man out of his home, drag him twelve thousand miles away, then to drive him into consumption and . . . and what is it all for, one wonders? To turn him into a servant for some Captain Kopeikin or midshipman Dirka! How logical!"

"It's not hard work, Pavel Ivanitch. You get up in the morning and clean the boots, get the samovar, sweep the rooms, and then you have nothing more to do. The lieutenant is all the day drawing plans, and if you like you can say your prayers, if you like you can read a book or go out into the street. God grant everyone such a life."

"Yes, very nice, the lieutenant draws plans all the day and you sit in the kitchen and pine for home. . . . Plans indeed! . . . It is not plans that matter, but a human life. Life is not given twice, it must be treated mercifully."

"Of course, Pavel Ivanitch, a bad man gets no mercy anywhere, neither at home nor in the army, but if you live as you ought and obey orders, who has any need to insult you? The officers are educated gentlemen, they understand. . . . In five years I was never once in prison, and I was never struck a blow, so help me God, but once."

"What for?"

"For fighting. I have a heavy hand, Pavel Ivanitch. Four Chinamen came into our yard; they were bringing firewood or something, I don't remember. Well, I was bored and I knocked them about a bit, one's nose began bleeding, damn the fellow. . . . The lieutenant saw it through the little window, he was angry and gave me a box on the ear."

"Foolish, pitiful man . . ." whispered Pavel Ivanitch. "You don't understand anything."

He was utterly exhausted by the tossing of the ship and closed his eyes; his head alternately fell back and dropped forward on his breast. Several times he tried to lie down but nothing came of it; his difficulty in breathing prevented it.

"And what did you hit the four Chinamen for?" he asked a little while afterwards.

"Oh, nothing. They came into the yard and I hit them."

And a stillness followed. . . . The card-players had been playing for two hours with enthusiasm and loud abuse of one another, but the motion of the ship overcame them, too; they threw aside the cards and lay down. Again Gusev saw the big pond, the brick building, the village. . . . Again the sledge was coming along, again Vanka was laughing and Akulka, silly little thing, threw open her fur coat and stuck her feet out, as much as to say: "Look, good people, my snow-boots are not like Vanka's, they are new ones."

"Five years old, and she has no sense yet," Gusev muttered in delirium. "Instead of kicking your legs you had better come and get your soldier uncle a drink. I will give you something nice."

Then Andron with a flintlock gun on his shoulder was carrying a hare he had killed, and he was followed by the decrepit old Jew Isaitchik, who offers to barter the hare for a piece of soap; then the black calf in the shed, then Domna sewing at a shirt and crying about something, and then again the bull's head without eyes, black smoke. . . .

Overhead someone gave a loud shout, several sailors ran by, they seemed to be dragging something bulky over the deck, something fell with a crash. Again they ran by. . . . Had something gone wrong? Gusev raised his head, listened, and saw that the two soldiers and the sailor were playing cards again; Pavel Ivanitch was sitting up moving his lips. It was stifling, one hadn't strength to breathe, one was thirsty, the water was warm, disgusting. The ship heaved as much as ever.

Suddenly something strange happened to one of the soldiers playing cards. . . . He called hearts diamonds, got muddled in his score, and dropped his cards, then with a frightened, foolish smile looked round at all of them.

"I shan't be a minute, mates, I'll . . ." he said, and lay down on the floor.

Everybody was amazed. They called to him, he did not answer.

"Stepan, maybe you are feeling bad, eh?" the soldier with his arm in a sling asked him. "Perhaps we had better bring the priest, eh?"

"Have a drink of water, Stepan . . ." said the sailor. "Here, lad, drink."

"Why are you knocking the jug against his teeth?" said Gusev angrily. "Don't you see, turnip head?"

"What?"

"What?" Gusev repeated, mimicking him. "There is no breath in him, he is dead! That's what! What nonsensical people, Lord have mercy on us . . . !"

III

The ship was not rocking and Pavel Ivanitch was more cheerful. He was no longer ill-humoured. His face had a boastful, defiant, mocking expression. He looked as though he wanted to say: "Yes, in a minute I will tell you something that will make you split your sides with laughing." The little round window was open and a soft breeze was blowing on Pavel Ivanitch. There was a sound of voices, of the plash of oars in the water. . . . Just under the little window someone began droning in a high, unpleasant voice: no doubt it was a Chinaman singing.

"Here we are in the harbour," said Pavel Ivanitch, smiling ironically. "Only another month and we shall be in Russia. Well, worthy gentlemen and warriors! I shall arrive at Odessa and from there go straight to Harkov. In Harkov I have a friend, a literary man. I shall go to him and say, 'Come, old man, put aside your horrid subjects, ladies' amours and the beauties of nature, and show up human depravity.' "

For a minute he pondered, then said:

"Gusev, do you know how I took them in?"

"Took in whom, Pavel Ivanitch?"

"Why, these fellows. . . . You know that on this steamer there is only a first-class and a third-class, and they only allow

peasants—that is the riff-raff—to go in the third. If you have got on a reefer jacket and have the faintest resemblance to a gentleman or a bourgeois you must go first-class, if you please. You must fork out five hundred roubles if you die for it. Why, I ask, have you made such a rule? Do you want to raise the prestige of educated Russians thereby? Not a bit of it. We don't let you go third-class simply because a decent person can't go third-class; it is very horrible and disgusting. Yes, indeed. I am very grateful for such solicitude for decent people's welfare. But in any case, whether it is nasty there or nice, five hundred roubles I haven't got. I haven't pilfered government money. I haven't exploited the natives, I haven't trafficked in contraband, I have flogged no one to death, so judge whether I have the right to travel first-class and even less to reckon myself of the educated class. But you won't catch them with logic. . . . One has to resort to deception. I put on a workman's coat and high boots, I assumed a drunken, servile mug and went to the agents: 'Give us a little ticket, your honour,' said I. . . ."

"Why, what class do you belong to?" asked a sailor.

"Clerical. My father was an honest priest, he always told the great ones of the world the truth to their faces; and he had a great deal to put up with in consequence."

Pavel Ivanitch was exhausted with talking and gasped for breath, but still went on:

"Yes, I always tell people the truth to their faces. I am not afraid of anyone or anything. There is a vast difference between me and all of you in that respect. You are in darkness, you are blind, crushed; you see nothing and what you do see you don't understand. . . . You are told the wind breaks loose from its chain, that you are beasts, Petchenyegs, and you believe it; they punch you in the neck, you kiss their hands; some animal in a sable-lined coat robs you and then tips you fifteen kopecks and you: 'Let me kiss your hand, sir.' You are pariahs, pitiful people. . . . I am a different sort. My eyes are open, I see it all as clearly as a hawk or an eagle when it floats over the earth, and I understand it all. I am a living

protest. I see irresponsible tyranny—I protest. I see cant and hypocrisy—I protest. I see swine triumphant—I protest. And I cannot be suppressed, no Spanish Inquisition can make me hold my tongue. No. . . . Cut out my tongue and I would protest in dumb show; shut me up in a cellar—I will shout from it to be heard half a mile away, or I will starve myself to death that they may have another weight on their black consciences. Kill me and I will haunt them with my ghost. All my acquaintances say to me: 'You are a most insufferable person, Pavel Ivanitch.' I am proud of such a reputation. I have served three years in the far East, and I shall be remembered there for a hundred years: I had rows with everyone. My friends write to me from Russia, 'Don't come back,' but here I am going back to spite them . . . yes. . . . That is life as I understand it. That is what one can call life."

Gusev was looking at the little window and was not listening. A boat was swaying on the transparent, soft, turquoise water all bathed in hot, dazzling sunshine. In it there were naked Chinamen holding up cages with canaries and calling out:

"It sings, it sings!"

Another boat knocked against the first; the steam cutter darted by. And then there came another boat with a fat Chinaman sitting in it, eating rice with little sticks.

Languidly the water heaved, languidly the white seagulls floated over it.

"I should like to give that fat fellow one in the neck," thought Gusev, gazing at the stout Chinaman, with a yawn.

He dozed off, and it seemed to him that all nature was dozing, too. Time flew swiftly by; imperceptibly the day passed, imperceptibly the darkness came on. . . . The steamer was no longer standing still, but moving on further.

IV

Two days passed, Pavel Ivanitch lay down instead of sitting up; his eyes were closed, his nose seemed to have grown sharper.

"Pavel Ivanitch," Gusev called to him. "Hey, Pavel Ivanitch."

Pavel Ivanitch opened his eyes and moved his lips.

"Are you feeling bad?"

"No . . . it's nothing . . ." answered Pavel Ivanitch, gasping. "Nothing; on the contrary . . . I am rather better. . . . You see I can lie down. . . . I am a little easier. . . ."

"Well, thank God for that, Pavel Ivanitch."

"When I compare myself with you I am sorry for you . . . poor fellow. My lungs are all right, it is only a stomach cough. . . . I can stand hell, let alone the Red Sea. Besides I take a critical attitude to my illness and to the medicines they give me for it. While you . . . you are in darkness. . . . It's hard for you, very, very hard!"

The ship was not rolling, it was calm, but as hot and stifling as a bath-house; it was not only hard to speak but even hard to listen. Gusev hugged his knees, laid his head on them and thought of his home. Good heavens, what a relief it was to think of snow and cold in that stifling heat! You drive in a sledge, all at once the horses take fright at something and bolt. . . . Regardless of the road, the ditches, the ravines, they dash like mad things, right through the village, over the pond by the pottery works, out across the open fields. "Hold on," the pottery hands and the peasants shout, meeting them. "Hold on." But why? Let the keen, cold wind beat in one's face and bite one's hands; let the lumps of snow, kicked up by the horses' hoofs, fall on one's cap, on one's back, down one's collar, on one's chest, let the runners ring on the snow, and the traces and the sledge be smashed, deuce take them one and all! And how delightful when the sledge upsets and you go flying full tilt into a drift, face downwards in the snow, and then you get up white all over with icicles on your moustaches; no cap, no gloves, your belt undone. . . . People laugh, the dogs bark. . . .

Pavel Ivanitch half opened one eye, looked at Gusev with it, and asked softly:

"Gusev, did your commanding officer steal?"

"Who can tell, Pavel Ivanitch! We can't say, it didn't reach us."

And after that a long time passed in silence. Gusev brooded, muttered something in delirium, and kept drinking water; it was hard for him to talk and hard to listen, and he was afraid of being talked to. An hour passed, a second, a third; evening came on, then night, but he did not notice it. He still sat dreaming of the frost.

There was a sound as though someone came into the hospital, and voices were audible, but a few minutes passed and all was still again.

"The Kingdom of Heaven and eternal peace," said the soldier with his arm in a sling. "He was an uncomfortable man."

"What?" asked Gusev. "Who?"

"He is dead, they have just carried him up."

"Oh, well," muttered Gusev, yawning, "the Kingdom of Heaven be his."

"What do you think?" the soldier with his arm in a sling asked Gusev. "Will he be in the Kingdom of Heaven or not?"

"Who is it you are talking about?"

"Pavel Ivanitch."

"He will be . . . he suffered so long. And there is another thing, he belonged to the clergy, and the priests always have a lot of relations. Their prayers will save him."

The soldier with the sling sat down on a hammock near Gusev and said in an undertone:

"And you, Gusev, are not long for this world. You will never get to Russia."

"Did the doctor or his assistant say so?" asked Gusev.

"It isn't that they said so, but one can see it. . . . One can see directly when a man's going to die. You don't eat, you don't drink; it's dreadful to see how thin you've got. It's consumption, in fact. I say it, not to upset you, but because maybe you would like to have the sacrament and extreme

unction. And if you have any money you had better give it to the senior officer."

"I haven't written home . . ." Gusev sighed. "I shall die and they won't know."

"They'll hear of it," the sick sailor brought out in a bass voice. "When you die they will put it down in the *Gazette,* at Odessa they will send in a report to the commanding officer there and he will send it to the parish or somewhere. . . ."

Gusev began to be uneasy after such a conversation and to feel a vague yearning. He drank water—it was not that; he dragged himself to the window and breathed the hot, moist air—it was not that; he tried to think of home, of the frost—it was not that. . . . At last it seemed to him one minute longer in the ward and he would certainly expire.

"It's stifling, mates . . ." he said. "I'll go on deck. Help me up, for Christ's sake."

"All right," assented the soldier with the sling. "I'll carry you, you can't walk, hold on to my neck."

Gusev put his arm round the soldier's neck, the latter put his unhurt arm round him and carried him up. On the deck sailors and time-expired soldiers were lying asleep side by side; there were so many of them it was difficult to pass.

"Stand down," the soldier with the sling said softly. "Follow me quietly, hold on to my shirt. . . ."

It was dark. There was no light on deck, nor on the masts, nor anywhere on the sea around. At the furthest end of the ship the man on watch was standing perfectly still like a statue, and it looked as though he were asleep. It seemed as though the steamer were abandoned to itself and were going at its own will.

"Now they will throw Pavel Ivanitch into the sea," said the soldier with the sling. "In a sack and then into the water."

"Yes, that's the rule."

"But it's better to lie at home in the earth. Anyway, your mother comes to the grave and weeps."

"Of course."

There was a smell of hay and of dung. There were oxen

standing with drooping heads by the ship's rail. One, two, three; eight of them! And there was a little horse. Gusev put out his hand to stroke it, but it shook its head, showed its teeth, and tried to bite his sleeve.

"Damned brute . . ." said Gusev angrily.

The two of them, he and the soldier, threaded their way to the head of the ship, then stood at the rail and looked up and down. Overhead deep sky, bright stars, peace and stillness, exactly as at home in the village, below darkness and disorder. The tall waves were resounding, no one could tell why. Whichever wave you looked at each one was trying to rise higher than all the rest and to chase and crush the next one; after it a third as fierce and hideous flew noisily, with a glint of light on its white crest.

The sea has no sense and no pity. If the steamer had been smaller and not made of thick iron, the waves would have crushed it to pieces without the slightest compunction, and would have devoured all the people in it with no distinction of saints or sinners. The steamer had the same cruel and meaningless expression. This monster with its huge beak was dashing onwards, cutting millions of waves in its path; it had no fear of the darkness nor the wind, nor of space, nor of solitude, caring for nothing, and if the ocean had its people, this monster would have crushed them, too, without distinction of saints or sinners.

"Where are we now?" asked Gusev.

"I don't know. We must be in the ocean."

"There is no sight of land. . . ."

"No indeed! They say we shan't see it for seven days."

The two soldiers watched the white foam with the phosphorus light on it and were silent, thinking. Gusev was the first to break the silence.

"There is nothing to be afraid of," he said, "only one is full of dread as though one were sitting in a dark forest; but if, for instance, they let a boat down on to the water this minute and an officer ordered me to go a hundred miles over the sea

to catch fish, I'd go. Or, let's say, if a Christian were to fall into the water this minute, I'd go in after him. A German or a Chinaman I wouldn't save, but I'd go in after a Christian."

"And are you afraid to die?"

"Yes. I am sorry for the folks at home. My brother at home, you know, isn't steady; he drinks, he beats his wife for nothing, he does not honour his parents. Everything will go to ruin without me, and father and my old mother will be begging their bread, I shouldn't wonder. But my legs won't bear me, brother, and it's hot here. Let's go to sleep."

V

Gusev went back to the ward and got into his hammock. He was again tormented by a vague craving, and he could not make out what he wanted. There was an oppression on his chest, a throbbing in his head, his mouth was so dry that it was difficult for him to move his tongue. He dozed, and murmured in his sleep, and, worn out with nightmares, his cough, and the stifling heat, towards morning he fell into a sound sleep. He dreamed that they were just taking the bread out of the oven in the barracks and he climbed into the stove and had a steam bath in it, lashing himself with a bunch of birch twigs. He slept for two days, and at midday on the third two sailors came down and carried him out.

He was sewn up in sailcloth and to make him heavier they put with him two iron weights. Sewn up in the sailcloth he looked like a carrot or a radish: broad at the head and narrow at the feet. . . . Before sunset they brought him up to the deck and put him on a plank; one end of the plank lay on the side of the ship, the other on a box, placed on a stool. Round him stood the soldiers and the officers with their caps off.

"Blessed be the Name of the Lord . . ." the priest began. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be."

"Amen," chanted three sailors.

The soldiers and the officers crossed themselves and looked away at the waves. It was strange that a man should be sewn

up in sailcloth and should soon be flying into the sea. Was it possible that such a thing might happen to anyone?

The priest strewed earth upon Gusev and bowed down. They sang "Eternal Memory."

The man on watch duty tilted up the end of the plank, Gusev slid off and flew head foremost, turned a somersault in the air and splashed into the sea. He was covered with foam and for a moment looked as though he were wrapped in lace, but the minute passed and he disappeared in the waves.

He went rapidly towards the bottom. Did he reach it? It was said to be three miles to the bottom. After sinking sixty or seventy feet, he began moving more and more slowly, swaying rhythmically, as though he were hesitating, and, carried along by the current, moved more rapidly sideways than downwards.

Then he was met by a shoal of the fish called harbour pilots. Seeing the dark body the fish stopped as though petrified, and suddenly turned round and disappeared. In less than a minute they flew back swift as an arrow to Gusev, and began zig-zagging round him in the water.

After that another dark body appeared. It was a shark. It swam under Gusev with dignity and no show of interest, as though it did not notice him, and sank down upon its back, then it turned belly upwards, basking in the warm, transparent water and languidly opened its jaws with two rows of teeth. The harbour pilots are delighted, they stop to see what will come next. After playing a little with the body the shark nonchalantly puts its jaws under it, cautiously touches it with its teeth, and the sailcloth is rent its full length from head to foot; one of the weights falls out and frightens the harbour pilots, and striking the shark on the ribs goes rapidly to the bottom.

Overhead at this time the clouds are massed together on the side where the sun is setting; one cloud like a triumphal arch, another like a lion, a third like a pair of scissors. . . . From behind the clouds a broad, green shaft of light pierces through and stretches to the middle of the sky; a little later

another, violet-coloured, lies beside it; next that, one of gold, then one rose-coloured. . . . The sky turns a soft lilac. Looking at this gorgeous, enchanted sky, at first the ocean scowls, but soon it, too, takes tender, joyous, passionate colours for which it is hard to find a name in human speech.

HOME

"SOMEONE came from the Grigoryevs' to fetch a book, but I said you were not at home. The postman brought the newspaper and two letters. By the way, Yevgeny Petrovitch, I should like to ask you to speak to Seryozha. To-day, and the day before yesterday, I have noticed that he is smoking. When I began to expostulate with him, he put his fingers in his ears as usual, and sang loudly to drown my voice."

Yevgeny Petrovitch Bykovsky, the prosecutor of the circuit court, who had just come back from a session and was taking off his gloves in his study, looked at the governess as she made her report, and laughed.

"Seryozha smoking . . ." he said, shrugging his shoulders. "I can picture the little cherub with a cigarette in his mouth! Why, how old is he?"

"Seven. You think it is not important, but at his age smoking is a bad and pernicious habit, and bad habits ought to be eradicated in the beginning."

"Perfectly true. And where does he get the tobacco?"

"He takes it from the drawer in your table."

"Yes? In that case, send him to me."

When the governess had gone out, Bykovsky sat down in an arm-chair before his writing-table, shut his eyes, and fell to thinking. He pictured his Seryozha with a huge cigar, a yard long, in the midst of clouds of tobacco smoke, and this caricature made him smile; at the same time, the grave, troubled face of the governess called up memories of the long past, half-forgotten time when smoking aroused in his teachers and parents a strange, not quite intelligible horror. It really was horror. Children were mercilessly flogged and expelled from

school, and their lives were made a misery on account of smoking, though not a single teacher or father knew exactly what was the harm or sinfulness of smoking. Even very intelligent people did not scruple to wage war on a vice which they did not understand. Yevgeny Petrovitch remembered the headmaster of the high school, a very cultured and good-natured old man, who was so appalled when he found a high-school boy with a cigarette in his mouth that he turned pale, immediately summoned an emergence committee of the teachers, and sentenced the sinner to expulsion. This was probably a law of social life: the less an evil was understood, the more fiercely and coarsely it was attacked.

The prosecutor remembered two or three boys who had been expelled and their subsequent life, and could not help thinking that very often the punishment did a great deal more harm than the crime itself. The living organism has the power of rapidly adapting itself, growing accustomed and inured to any atmosphere whatever, otherwise man would be bound to feel every moment what an irrational basis there often is underlying his rational activity, and how little of established truth and certainty there is even in work so responsible and so terrible in its effects as that of the teacher, of the lawyer, of the writer. . . .

And such light and discursive thoughts as visit the brain only when it is weary and resting began straying through Yevgeny Petrovitch's head; there is no telling whence and why they come, they do not remain long in the mind, but seem to glide over its surface without sinking deeply into it. For people who are forced for whole hours, and even days, to think by routine in one direction, such free private thinking affords a kind of comfort, an agreeable solace.

It was between eight and nine o'clock in the evening. Overhead, on the second storey, someone was walking up and down, and on the floor above that four hands were playing scales. The pacing of the man overhead who, to judge from his nervous step, was thinking of something harassing, or was suffering from toothache, and the monotonous scales gave the stillness

of the evening a drowsiness that disposed to lazy reveries. In the nursery, two rooms away, the governess and Seryozha were talking.

"Pa-pa has come!" carolled the child. "Papa has co-ome. Pa! Pa! Pa!"

"Votre père vous appelle, allez vite!" cried the governess, shrill as a frightened bird. "I am speaking to you!"

"What am I to say to him, though?" Yevgeny Petrovitch wondered.

But before he had time to think of anything whatever his son Seryozha, a boy of seven, walked into the study.

He was a child whose sex could only have been guessed from his dress: weakly, white-faced, and fragile. He was limp like a hot-house plant, and everything about him seemed extraordinarily soft and tender: his movements, his curly hair, the look in his eyes, his velvet jacket.

"Good evening, papa!" he said, in a soft voice, clambering on to his father's knee and giving him a rapid kiss on his neck. "Did you send for me?"

"Excuse me, Sergey Yevgenitch," answered the prosecutor, removing him from his knee. "Before kissing we must have a talk, and a serious talk . . . I am angry with you, and don't love you any more. I tell you, my boy, I don't love you, and you are no son of mine. . . ."

Seryozha looked intently at his father, then shifted his eyes to the table, and shrugged his shoulders.

"What have I done to you?" he asked in perplexity, blinking. "I haven't been in your study all day, and I haven't touched anything."

"Natalya Semyonovna has just been complaining to me that you have been smoking. . . . Is it true? Have you been smoking?"

"Yes, I did smoke once. . . . That's true. . . ."

"Now you see you are lying as well," said the prosecutor, frowning to disguise a smile. "Natalya Semyonovna has seen you smoking twice. So you see you have been detected in three

misdeeds: smoking, taking someone else's tobacco, and lying. Three faults."

"Oh yes," Seryozha recollected, and his eyes smiled. "That's true, that's true; I smoked twice: to-day and before."

"So you see it was not once, but twice. . . . I am very, very much displeased with you! You used to be a good boy, but now I see you are spoilt and have become a bad one."

Yevgeny Petrovitch smoothed down Seryozha's collar and thought:

"What more am I to say to him!"

"Yes, it's not right," he continued. "I did not expect it of you. In the first place, you ought not to take tobacco that does not belong to you. Every person has only the right to make use of his own property; if he takes anyone else's . . . he is a bad man!" ("I am not saying the right thing!" thought Yevgeny Petrovitch.) "For instance, Natalya Semyonovna has a box with her clothes in it. That's her box, and we—that is, you and I—dare not touch it, as it is not ours. That's right, isn't it? You've got toy horses and pictures. . . . I don't take them, do I? Perhaps I might like to take them, but . . . they are not mine, but yours!"

"Take them if you like!" said Seryozha, raising his eyebrows. "Please don't hesitate, papa, take them! That yellow dog on your table is mine, but I don't mind. . . . Let it stay."

"You don't understand me," said Bykovsky. "You have given me the dog, it is mine now and I can do what I like with it; but I didn't give you the tobacco! The tobacco is mine." ("I am not explaining properly!" thought the prosecutor. "It's wrong! Quite wrong!") "If I want to smoke someone else's tobacco, I must first of all ask his permission. . . ."

Languidly linking one phrase on to another and imitating the language of the nursery, Bykovsky tried to explain to his son the meaning of property. Seryozha gazed at his chest and listened attentively (he liked talking to his father in the

evening), then he leaned his elbow on the edge of the table and began screwing up his short-sighted eyes at the papers and the inkstand. His eyes strayed over the table and rested on the gum-bottle.

"Papa, what is gum made of?" he asked suddenly, putting the bottle to his eyes.

Bykovsky took the bottle out of his hands and set it in its place and went on:

"Secondly, you smoke. . . . That's very bad. Though I smoke it does not follow that you may. I smoke and know that it is stupid, I blame myself and don't like myself for it." ("A clever teacher, I am!" he thought.) "Tobacco is very bad for the health, and anyone who smokes dies earlier than he should. It's particularly bad for boys like you to smoke. Your chest is weak, and you haven't reached your full strength yet, and smoking leads to consumption and other illness in weak people. Uncle Ignat died of consumption, you know. If he hadn't smoked, perhaps he would have lived till now."

Seryozha looked pensively at the lamp, touched the lamp-shade with his finger, and heaved a sigh.

"Uncle Ignat played the violin splendidly!" he said. "His violin is at the Grigoryevs' now."

Seryozha leaned his elbows on the edge of the table again, and sank into thought. His white face wore a fixed expression, as though he were listening or following a train of thought of his own; distress and something like fear came into his big staring eyes. He was most likely thinking now of death, which had so lately carried off his mother and Uncle Ignat. Death carries mothers and uncles off to the other world, while their children and violins remain upon the earth. The dead live somewhere in the sky beside the stars, and look down from there upon the earth. Can they endure the parting?

"What am I to say to him?" thought Yevgeny Petrovitch. "He's not listening to me. Obviously he does not regard either his misdoings or my arguments as serious. How am I to drive it home?"

The prosecutor got up and walked about the study.

"Formerly, in my time, these questions were very simply settled," he reflected. "Every urchin who was caught smoking was thrashed. The cowardly and faint-hearted did actually give up smoking, any who were somewhat more plucky and intelligent, after the thrashing took to carrying tobacco in the legs of their boots, and smoking in the barn. When they were caught in the barn and thrashed again, they would go away to smoke by the river . . . and so on, till the boy grew up. My mother used to give me money and sweets not to smoke. Now that method is looked upon as worthless and immoral. The modern teacher, taking his stand on logic, tries to make the child form good principles, not from fear, nor from desire for distinction or reward, but consciously."

While he was walking about, thinking, Seryozha climbed up with his legs on a chair sideways to the table, and began drawing. That he might not spoil official paper nor touch the ink, a heap of half-sheets, cut on purpose for him, lay on the table together with a blue pencil.

"Cook was chopping up cabbage to-day and she cut her finger," he said, drawing a little house and moving his eyebrows. "She gave such a scream that we were all frightened and ran into the kitchen. Stupid thing! Natalya Semyonovna told her to dip her finger in cold water, but she sucked it. . . . And how could she put a dirty finger in her mouth! That's not proper, you know, papa!"

Then he went on to describe how, while they were having dinner, a man with a hurdy-gurdy had come into the yard with a little girl, who had danced and sung to the music.

"He has his own train of thought!" thought the prosecutor. "He has a little world of his own in his head, and he has his own ideas of what is important and unimportant. To gain possession of his attention, it's not enough to imitate his language, one must also be able to think in the way he does. He would understand me perfectly if I really were sorry for the loss of the tobacco, if I felt injured and cried. . . . That's why no one can take the place of a mother in bringing up a child, because she can feel, cry, and laugh together with the

child. One can do nothing by logic and morality. What more shall I say to him? What?"

And it struck Yevgeny Petrovitch as strange and absurd that he, an experienced advocate, who spent half his life in the practice of reducing people to silence, forestalling what they had to say, and punishing them, was completely at a loss and did not know what to say to the boy.

"I say, give me your word of honour that you won't smoke again," he said.

"Word of hon-nour!" carolled Seryozha, pressing hard on the pencil and bending over the drawing. "Word of hon-nour!"

"Does he know what is meant by word of honour?" Bykovsky asked himself. "No, I am a poor teacher of morality! If some schoolmaster or one of our legal fellows could peep into my brain at this moment he would call me a poor stick, and would very likely suspect me of unnecessary subtlety. . . . But in school and in court, of course, all these wretched questions are far more simply settled than at home; here one has to do with people whom one loves beyond everything, and love is exacting and complicates the question. If this boy were not my son, but my pupil, or a prisoner on his trial, I should not be so cowardly, and my thoughts would not be racing all over the place!"

Yevgeny Petrovitch sat down to the table and pulled one of Seryozha's drawings to him. In it there was a house with a crooked roof, and smoke which came out of the chimney like a flash of lightning in zigzags up to the very edge of the paper; beside the house stood a soldier with dots for eyes and a bayonet that looked like the figure 4.

"A man can't be taller than a house," said the prosecutor.

Seryozha got on his knee, and moved about for some time to get comfortably settled there.

"No, papa!" he said, looking at his drawing. "If you were to draw the soldier small you would not see his eyes."

Ought he to argue with him? From daily observation of his son the prosecutor had become convinced that children,

like savages, have their own artistic standpoints and requirements peculiar to them, beyond the grasp of grown-up people. Had he been attentively observed, Seryozha might have struck a grown-up person as abnormal. He thought it possible and reasonable to draw men taller than houses, and to represent in pencil, not only objects, but even his sensations. Thus he would depict the sounds of an orchestra in the form of smoke like spherical blurs, a whistle in the form of a spiral thread. . . . To his mind sound was closely connected with form and colour, so that when he painted letters he invariably painted the letter L yellow, M red, A black, and so on.

Abandoning his drawing, Seryozha shifted about once more, got into a comfortable attitude, and busied himself with his father's beard. First he carefully smoothed it, then he parted it and began combing it into the shape of whiskers.

"Now you are like Ivan Stepanovitch," he said, "and in a minute you will be like our porter. Papa, why is it porters stand by doors? Is it to prevent thieves getting in?"

The prosecutor felt the child's breathing on his face, he was continually touching his hair with his cheek, and there was a warm soft feeling in his soul, as soft as though not only his hands but his whole soul were lying on the velvet of Seryozha's jacket. He looked at the boy's big dark eyes, and it seemed to him as though from those wide pupils there looked out at him his mother and his wife and everything that he had ever loved.

"To think of thrashing him . . ." he mused. "A nice task to devise a punishment for him! How can we undertake to bring up the young? In old days people were simpler and thought less, and so settled problems boldly. But we think too much, we are eaten up by logic. . . . The more developed a man is, the more he reflects and gives himself up to subtleties, the more undecided and scrupulous he becomes, and the more timidity he shows in taking action. How much courage and self-confidence it needs, when one comes to look into it closely, to undertake to teach, to judge, to write a thick book. . . ."

It struck ten.

"Come, boy, it's bedtime," said the prosecutor. "Say good-night and go."

"No, papa," said Seryozha, "I will stay a little longer. Tell me something! Tell me a story. . . ."

"Very well, only after the story you must go to bed at once."

Yevgeny Petrovitch on his free evenings was in the habit of telling Seryozha stories. Like most people engaged in practical affairs, he did not know a single poem by heart, and could not remember a single fairy tale, so he had to improvise. As a rule he began with the stereotyped: "In a certain country, in a certain kingdom," then he heaped up all kinds of innocent nonsense and had no notion as he told the beginning how the story would go on, and how it would end. Scenes, characters, and situations were taken at random, impromptu, and the plot and the moral came of itself as it were, with no plan on the part of the story-teller. Seryozha was very fond of this improvisation, and the prosecutor noticed that the simpler and the less ingenious the plot, the stronger the impression it made on the child.

"Listen," he said, raising his eyes to the ceiling. "Once upon a time, in a certain country, in a certain kingdom, there lived an old, very old emperor with a long grey beard, and . . . and with great moustaches like this. Well, he lived in a glass palace which sparkled and glittered in the sun, like a great piece of clear ice. The palace, my boy, stood in a huge garden, in which there grew oranges, you know . . . bergamots, cherries . . . tulips, roses, and lilies-of-the-valley were in flower in it, and birds of different colours sang there. . . . Yes. . . . On the trees there hung little glass bells, and, when the wind blew, they rang so sweetly that one was never tired of hearing them. Glass gives a softer, tenderer note than metals. . . . Well, what next? There were fountains in the garden. . . . Do you remember you saw a fountain at Auntie Sonya's summer villa? Well, there were fountains just like that in the emperor's garden, only ever so much bigger, and the jets of water reached to the top of the highest poplar."

Yevgeny Petrovitch thought a moment, and went on:

"The old emperor had an only son and heir of his kingdom—a boy as little as you. He was a good boy. He was never naughty, he went to bed early, he never touched anything on the table, and altogether he was a sensible boy. He had only one fault, he used to smoke. . . ."

Seryozha listened attentively, and looked into his father's eyes without blinking. The prosecutor went on, thinking: "What next?" He spun out a long rigmarole, and ended like this:

"The emperor's son fell ill with consumption through smoking, and died when he was twenty. His infirm and sick old father was left without anyone to help him. There was no one to govern the kingdom and defend the palace. Enemies came, killed the old man, and destroyed the palace, and now there are neither cherries, nor birds, nor little bells in the garden. . . . That's what happened."

This ending struck Yevgeny Petrovitch as absurd and naïve, but the whole story made an intense impression on Seryozha. Again his eyes were clouded by mournfulness and something like fear; for a minute he looked pensively at the dark window, shuddered, and said, in a sinking voice:

"I am not going to smoke any more. . . ."

When he had said good-night and gone away his father walked up and down the room and smiled to himself.

"They would tell me it was the influence of beauty, artistic form," he meditated. "It may be so, but that's no comfort. It's not the right way, all the same. . . . Why must morality and truth never be offered in their crude form, but only with embellishments, sweetened and gilded like pills? It's not normal. . . . It's falsification . . . deception . . . tricks. . . ."

He thought of the jurymen to whom it was absolutely necessary to make a "speech," of the general public who absorb history only from legends and historical novels, and of himself and how he had gathered an understanding of life not from sermons and laws, but from fables, novels, poems.

"Medicine should be sweet, truth beautiful, and man has

had this foolish habit since the days of Adam . . . though indeed, perhaps it is all natural, and ought to be so. . . . There are many deceptions and delusions in nature that serve a purpose."

He set to work, but lazy, intimate thoughts still strayed through his mind for a good while. Overhead the scales could no longer be heard, but the inhabitant of the second storey was still pacing from one end of the room to another.

AN INCIDENT

MORNING. Brilliant sunshine is piercing through the frozen lacework on the window-panes into the nursery. Vanya, a boy of six, with a cropped head and a nose like a button, and his sister Nina, a short, chubby, curly-headed girl of four, wake up and look crossly at each other through the bars of their cots.

"Oo-oo-oo! naughty children!" grumbles their nurse. "Good people have had their breakfast already, while you can't get your eyes open."

The sunbeams frolic over the rugs, the walls, and nurse's skirts, and seem inviting the children to join in their play, but they take no notice. They have woken up in a bad humour. Nina pouts, makes a grimace, and begins to whine:

"Brea-eakfast, nurse, breakfast!"

Vanya knits his brows and ponders what to pitch upon to howl over. He has already begun screwing up his eyes and opening his mouth, but at that instant the voice of mamma reaches them from the drawing-room, saying: "Don't forget to give the cat her milk, she has a family now!"

The children's puckered countenances grow smooth again as they look at each other in astonishment. Then both at once begin shouting, jump out of their cots, and filling the air with piercing shrieks, run barefoot, in their nightgowns, to the kitchen.

"The cat has puppies!" they cry. "The cat has got puppies!"

Under the bench in the kitchen there stands a small box, the one in which Stepan brings coal when he lights the fire. The cat is peeping out of the box. There is an expression of

extreme exhaustion on her grey face; her green eyes, with their narrow black pupils, have a languid, sentimental look. . . . From her face it is clear that the only thing lacking to complete her happiness is the presence in the box of "him," the father of her children, to whom she had abandoned herself so recklessly! She wants to mew, and opens her mouth wide, but nothing but a hiss comes from her throat; the squealing of the kittens is audible.

The children squat on their heels before the box, and, motionless, holding their breath, gaze at the cat. . . . They are surprised, impressed, and do not hear nurse grumbling as she pursues them. The most genuine delight shines in the eyes of both.

Domestic animals play a scarcely noticed but undoubtedly beneficial part in the education and life of children. Which of us does not remember powerful but magnanimous dogs, lazy lapdogs, birds dying in captivity, dull-witted but haughty turkeys, mild old tabby cats, who forgave us when we trod on their tails for fun and caused them agonising pain? I even fancy, sometimes, that the patience, the fidelity, the readiness to forgive, and the sincerity which are characteristic of our domestic animals have a far stronger and more definite effect on the mind of a child that the long exhortations of some dry, pale Karl Karlovitch, or the misty expositions of a governess, trying to prove to children that water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen.

"What little things!" says Nina, opening her eyes wide and going off into a joyous laugh. "They are like mice!"

"One, two, three," Vanya counts. "Three kittens. So there is one for you, one for me, and one for somebody else, too."

"Murrm . . . murrm . . ." purrs the mother, flattered by their attention. "Murrm."

After gazing at the kittens, the children take them from under the cat, and begin squeezing them in their hands, then, not satisfied with this, they put them in the skirts of their nightgowns, and run into the other rooms.

"Mamma, the cat has got pups!" they shout.

Mamma is sitting in the drawing-room with some unknown gentleman. Seeing the children unwashed, undressed, with their nightgowns held up high, she is embarrassed, and looks at them severely.

"Let your nightgowns down, disgraceful children," she says. "Go out of the room, or I will punish you."

But the children do not notice either mamma's threats or the presence of a stranger. They put the kittens down on the carpet, and go off into deafening squeals. The mother walks round them, mewing imploringly. When, a little afterwards, the children are dragged off to the nursery, dressed, made to say their prayers, and given their breakfast, they are full of a passionate desire to get away from these prosaic duties as quickly as possible, and to run to the kitchen again.

Their habitual pursuits and games are thrown completely into the background.

The kittens throw everything into the shade by making their appearance in the world, and supply the great sensation of the day. If Nina or Vanya had been offered forty pounds of sweets or ten thousand kopecks for each kitten, they would have rejected such a barter without the slightest hesitation. In spite of the heated protests of the nurse and the cook, the children persist in sitting by the cat's box in the kitchen, busy with the kittens till dinner-time. Their faces are earnest and concentrated and express anxiety. They are worried not so much by the present as by the future of the kittens. They decide that one kitten shall remain at home with the old cat to be a comfort to her mother, while the second shall go to their summer villa, and the third shall live in the cellar, where there are ever so many rats.

"But why don't they look at us?" Nina wondered. "Their eyes are blind like the beggars'."

Vanya, too, is perturbed by this question. He tries to open one kitten's eyes, and spends a long time puffing and breathing hard over it, but his operation is unsuccessful. They are a good deal troubled, too, by the circumstance that the kittens

obstinately refuse the milk and the meat that is offered to them. Everything that is put before their little noses is eaten by their grey mamma.

"Let's build the kittens little houses," Vanya suggests. "They shall live in different houses, and the cat shall come and pay them visits. . . ."

Cardboard hat-boxes are put in the different corners of the kitchen and the kittens are installed in them. But this division turns out to be premature; the cat, still wearing an imploring and sentimental expression on her face, goes the round of all the hat-boxes, and carries off her children to their original position.

"The cat's their mother," observed Vanya, "but who is their father?"

"Yes, who is their father?" repeats Nina.

"They must have a father."

Vanya and Nina are a long time deciding who is to be the kittens' father, and, in the end, their choice falls on a big dark-red horse without a tail, which is lying in the store-cupboard under the stairs, together with other relics of toys that have outlived their day. They drag him up out of the store-cupboard and stand him by the box.

"Mind now!" they admonish him, "stand here and see they behave themselves properly."

All this is said and done in the gravest way, with an expression of anxiety on their faces. Vanya and Nina refuse to recognize the existence of any world but the box of kittens. Their joy knows no bounds. But they have to pass through bitter, agonising moments, too.

Just before dinner, Vanya is sitting in his father's study, gazing dreamily at the table. A kitten is moving about by the lamp, on stamped note paper. Vanya is watching its movements, and thrusting first a pencil, then a match into its little mouth. . . . All at once, as though he has sprung out of the floor, his father is beside the table.

"What's this?" Vanya hears, in an angry voice.

"It's . . . it's the kitty, papa. . . ."

"I'll give it you; look what you have done, you naughty boy! You've dirtied all my paper!"

To Vanya's great surprise his papa does not share his partiality for the kittens, and, instead of being moved to enthusiasm and delight, he pulls Vanya's ear and shouts:

"Stepan, take away this horrid thing."

At dinner, too, there is a scene. . . . During the second course there is suddenly the sound of a shrill mew. They begin to investigate its origin, and discover a kitten under Nina's pinafore.

"Nina, leave the table!" cries her father angrily. "Throw the kittens in the cesspool! I won't have the nasty things in the house! . . ."

Vanya and Nina are horrified. Death in the cesspool, apart from its cruelty, threatens to rob the cat and the wooden horse of their children, to lay waste the cat's box, to destroy their plans for the future, that fair future in which one cat will be a comfort to its old mother, another will live in the country, while the third will catch rats in the cellar. The children begin to cry and entreat that the kittens may be spared. Their father consents, but on the condition that the children do not go into the kitchen and touch the kittens.

After dinner, Vanya and Nina slouch about the rooms, feeling depressed. The prohibition of visits to the kitchen has reduced them to dejection. They refuse sweets, are naughty, and are rude to their mother. When their uncle Petrusha comes in the evening, they draw him aside, and complain to him of their father, who wanted to throw the kittens into the cesspool.

"Uncle Petrusha, tell mamma to have the kittens taken to the nursery," the children beg their uncle, "do-o tell her."

"There, there . . . very well," says their uncle, waving them off. "All right."

Uncle Petrusha does not usually come alone. He is accompanied by Nero, a big black dog of Danish breed, with drooping ears, and a tail as hard as a stick. The dog is silent, morose, and full of a sense of his own dignity. He takes not

the slightest notice of the children, and when he passes them hits them with his tail as though they were chairs. The children hate him from the bottom of their hearts, but on this occasion, practical considerations override sentiment.

"I say, Nina," says Vanya, opening his eyes wide. "Let Nero be their father, instead of the horse! The horse is dead and he is alive, you see."

They are waiting the whole evening for the moment when papa will sit down to his cards and it will be possible to take Nero to the kitchen without being observed. . . . At last, papa sits down to cards, mamma is busy with the samovar and not noticing the children.

The happy moment arrives.

"Come along!" Vanya whispers to his sister.

But, at that moment, Stepan comes in and, with a snigger, announces:

"Nero has eaten the kittens, madam."

Nina and Vanya turn pale and look at Stepan with horror.

"He really has . . ." laughs the footman, "he went to the box and gobbled them up."

The children expect that all the people in the house will be aghast and fall upon the miscreant Nero. But they all sit calmly in their seats, and only express surprise at the appetite of the huge dog. Papa and mamma laugh. Nero walks about by the table, wags his tail, and licks his lips complacently . . . the cat is the only one who is uneasy. With her tail in the air she walks about the rooms, looking suspiciously at people and mewing plaintively.

"Children, it's past nine," cries mamma, "it's bedtime."

Vanya and Nina go to bed, shed tears, and spend a long time thinking about the injured cat, and the cruel, insolent, and unpunished Nero.

IN EXILE

Old Semyon, nicknamed Canny, and a young Tatar, whom no one knew by name, were sitting on the river-bank by the camp-fire; the other three ferrymen were in the hut. Semyon, an old man of sixty, lean and toothless, but broad-shouldered and still healthy-looking, was drunk; he would have gone in to sleep long before, but he had a bottle in his pocket and he was afraid that the fellows in the hut would ask him for vodka. The Tatar was ill and weary, and wrapping himself up in his rags was describing how nice it was in the Simbirsk province, and what a beautiful and clever wife he had left behind at home. He was not more than twenty-five, and now by the light of the camp-fire, with his pale and sick, mournful face, he looked like a boy.

"To be sure, it is not paradise here," said Canny. "You can see for yourself, the water, the bare banks, clay, and nothing else. . . . Easter has long passed and yet there is ice on the river, and this morning there was snow. . . ."

"It's bad! it's bad!" said the Tatar, and looked round him in terror.

The dark, cold river was flowing ten paces away; it grumbled, lapped against the hollow clay banks and raced on swiftly towards the far-away sea. Close to the bank there was the dark blur of a big barge, which the ferrymen called a "karbos." Far away on the further bank, lights, dying down and flickering up again, zigzagged like little snakes; they were burning last year's grass. And beyond the little snakes there was darkness again. There little icicles could be heard knocking against the barge. It was damp and cold. . . .

The Tatar glanced at the sky. There were as many stars as at home, and the same blackness all round, but something was

lacking. At home in the Simbirsk province the stars were quite different, and so was the sky.

"It's bad! it's bad!" he repeated.

"You will get used to it," said Semyon, and he laughed. "Now you are young and foolish, the milk is hardly dry on your lips, and it seems to you in your foolishness that you are more wretched than anyone; but the time will come when you will say to yourself: 'I wish no one a better life than mine.' You look at me. Within a week the floods will be over and we shall set up the ferry; you will all go wandering off about Siberia while I shall stay and shall begin going from bank to bank. I've been going like that for twenty-two years, day and night. The pike and the salmon are under the water while I am on the water. And thank God for it, I want nothing; God give everyone such a life."

The Tatar threw some dry twigs on the camp-fire, lay down closer to the blaze, and said:

"My father is a sick man. When he dies my mother and wife will come here. They have promised."

"And what do you want your wife and mother for?" asked Canny. "That's mere foolishness, my lad. It's the devil confounding you, damn his soul! Don't you listen to him, the cursed one. Don't let him have his way. He is at you about the women, but you spite him; say, 'I don't want them!' He is on at you about freedom, but you stand up to him and say: 'I don't want it!' I want nothing, neither father nor mother, nor wife, nor freedom, nor post, nor paddock; I want nothing, damn their souls!"

Semyon took a pull at the bottle and went on:

"I am not a simple peasant, not of the working class, but the son of a deacon, and when I was free I lived at Kursk; I used to wear a frock-coat, and now I have brought myself to such a pass that I can sleep naked on the ground and eat grass. And I wish no one a better life. I want nothing and I am afraid of nobody, and the way I look at it is that there is nobody richer and freer than I am. When they sent me here from Russia from the first day I stuck it out; I want nothing!

The devil was at me about my wife and about my home and about freedom, but I told him: 'I want nothing.' I stuck to it, and here you see I live well, and I don't complain, and if anyone gives way to the devil and listens to him, if but once, he is lost, there is no salvation for him: he is sunk in the bog to the crown of his head and will never get out.

"It is not only a foolish peasant like you, but even gentlemen, well-educated people, are lost. Fifteen years ago they sent a gentleman here from Russia. He hadn't shared something with his brothers and had forged something in a will. They did say he was a prince or a baron, but maybe he was simply an official—who knows? Well, the gentleman arrived here, and first thing he bought himself a house and land in Muhortinskoe. 'I want to live by my own work,' says he, 'in the sweat of my brow, for I am not a gentleman now,' says he, 'but a settler.' 'Well,' says I, 'God help you, that's the right thing.' He was a young man then, busy and careful; he used to mow himself and catch fish and ride sixty miles on horseback. Only this is what happened: from the very first year he took to riding to Gyrino for the post; he used to stand on my ferry and sigh: 'Ech, Semyon, how long it is since they sent me any money from home!' 'You don't want money, Vassily Sergeyitch,' says I. 'What use is it to you? You cast away the past, and forget it as though it had never been at all, as though it had been a dream, and begin to live anew. Don't listen to the devil,' says I; 'he will bring you to no good, he'll draw you into a snare. Now you want money,' says I, 'but in a very little while you'll be wanting something else, and then more and more. If you want to be happy,' says I, 'the chief thing is not to want anything. Yes. . . . If,' says I, 'if Fate has wronged you and me cruelly, it's no good asking for her favor and bowing down to her, but you despise her and laugh at her, or else she will laugh at you.' That's what I said to him. . . .

"Two years later I ferried him across to this side, and he was rubbing his hands and laughing. 'I am going to Gyrino to meet my wife,' says he. 'She was sorry for me,' says he;

'she has come. She is good and kind.' And he was breathless with joy. So a day later he came with his wife. A beautiful young lady in a hat; in her arms was a baby girl. And lots of luggage of all sorts. And my Vassily Sergeyitch was fussing round her; he couldn't take his eyes off her and couldn't say enough in praise of her. 'Yes, brother Semyon, even in Siberia people can live!' 'Oh, all right,' thinks I, 'it will be a different tale presently.' And from that time forward he went almost every week to inquire whether money had not come from Russia. He wanted a lot of money. 'She is losing her youth and beauty here in Siberia for my sake,' says he, 'and sharing my bitter lot with me, and so I ought,' says he, 'to provide her with every comfort. . . .'

"To make it livelier for the lady he made acquaintance with the officials and all sorts of riff-raff. And of course he had to give food and drink to all that crew, and there had to be a piano and a shaggy lapdog on the sofa—plague take it! . . . Luxury, in fact, self-indulgence. The lady did not stay with him long. How could she? The clay, the water, the cold, no vegetables for you, no fruit. All around you ignorant and drunken people and no sort of manners, and she was a spoilt lady from Petersburg or Moscow. . . . To be sure she moped. Besides, her husband, say what you like, was not a gentleman now, but a settler—not the same rank.

"Three years later, I remember, on the eve of the Assumption, there was shouting from the further bank. I went over with the ferry, and what do I see but the lady, all wrapped up, and with her a young gentleman, an official. A sledge with three horses. . . . I ferried them across here, they got in and away like the wind. They were soon lost to sight. And towards morning Vassily Sergeyitch galloped down to the ferry. 'Didn't my wife come this way with a gentleman in spectacles, Semyon?' 'She did,' said I; 'you may look for the wind in the fields!' He galloped in pursuit of them. For five days and nights he was riding after them. When I ferried him over to the other side afterwards, he flung himself on the ferry and beat his head on the boards of the ferry and howled.

'So that's how it is,' says I. I laughed, and reminded him 'people can live even in Siberia!' And he beat his head harder than ever. . . .

"Then he began longing for freedom. His wife had slipped off to Russia, and of course he was drawn there to see her and to get her away from her lover. And he took, my lad, to galloping almost every day, either to the post or the town to see the commanding officer; he kept sending in petitions for them to have mercy on him and let him go back home; and he used to say that he had spent some two hundred roubles on telegrams alone. He sold his land and mortgaged his house to the Jews. He grew gray and bent, and yellow in the face, as though he was in consumption. If he talked to you he would go, khee—khee—khee, . . . and there were tears in his eyes. He kept rushing about like this with petitions for eight years, but now he has grown brighter and more cheerful again: he has found another whim to give way to. You see, his daughter has grown up. He looks at her, and she is the apple of his eye. And to tell the truth she is all right, good-looking, with black eyebrows and a lively disposition. Every Sunday he used to ride with her to church in Gyrino. They used to stand on the ferry, side by side, she would laugh and he could not take his eyes off her. 'Yes, Semyon,' says he, 'people can live even in Siberia. Even in Siberia there is happiness. Look,' says he, 'what a daughter I have got! I warrant you wouldn't find another like her for a thousand versts round.' 'Your daughter is all right,' says I, 'that's true, certainly.' But to myself I thought: 'Wait a bit, the wench is young, her blood is dancing, she wants to live, and there is no life here.' And she did begin to pine, my lad. . . . She faded and faded, and now she can hardly crawl about. Consumption.

"So you see what Siberian happiness is, damn its soul! You see how people can live in Siberia. . . . He has taken to going from one doctor to another and taking them home with him. As soon as he hears that two or three hundred miles away there is a doctor or a sorcerer, he will drive to fetch him. A terrible lot of money he spent on doctors, and to my

thinking he had better have spent the money on drink. . . . She'll die just the same. She is certain to die, and then it will be all over with him. He'll hang himself from grief or run away to Russia—that's a sure thing. He'll run away and they'll catch him, then he will be tried, sent to prison, he will have a taste of the lash. . . ."

"Good! good!" said the Tatar, shivering with cold.

"What is good?" asked Canny.

"His wife, his daughter. . . . What of prison and what of sorrow!—anyway, he did see his wife and his daughter. . . . You say, want nothing. But 'nothing' is bad! His wife lived with him three years—that was a gift from God. 'Nothing' is bad, but three years is good. How not understand?"

Shivering and hesitating, with effort picking out the Russian words of which he knew but few, the Tatar said that God forbid one should fall sick and die in a strange land, and be buried in the cold and dark earth; that if his wife came to him for one day, even for one hour, that for such happiness he would be ready to bear any suffering and to thank God. Better one day of happiness than nothing.

Then he described again what a beautiful and clever wife he had left at home. Then, clutching his head in both hands, he began crying and assuring Semyon that he was not guilty, and was suffering for nothing. His two brothers and an uncle had carried off a peasant's horses, and had beaten the old man till he was half dead, and the commune had not judged fairly, but had contrived a sentence by which all the three brothers were sent to Siberia, while the uncle, a rich man, was left at home.

"You will get used to it!" said Semyon.

The Tatar was silent, and stared with tear-stained eyes at the fire; his face expressed bewilderment and fear, as though he still did not understand why he was here in the darkness and the wet, beside strangers, and not in the Simbirsk province.

Canny lay near the fire, chuckled at something, and began humming a song in an undertone.

"What joy has she with her father?" he said a little later.

"He loves her and he rejoices in her, that's true; but, mate, you must mind your ps and qs with him, he is a strict old man, a harsh old man. And young wenches don't want strictness. They want petting and ha-ha-ha! and ho-ho-ho! and scent and pomade. Yes. . . . Ech! life, life," sighed Semyon, and he got up heavily. "The vodka is all gone, so it is time to sleep. Eh? I am going, my lad. . . ."

Left alone, the Tatar put on more twigs, lay down and stared at the fire; he began thinking of his own village and of his wife. If his wife could only come for a month, for a day; and then if she liked she might go back again. Better a month or even a day than nothing. But if his wife kept her promise and came, what would he have to feed her on? Where could she live here?

"If there were not something to eat, how could she live?" the Tatar asked aloud.

He was paid only ten kopecks for working all day and all night at the oar; it is true that travelers gave him tips for tea and for vodka, but the men shared all they received among themselves, and gave nothing to the Tatar, but only laughed at him. And from poverty he was hungry, cold, and frightened. . . . Now, when his whole body was aching and shivering, he ought to go into the hut and lie down to sleep; but he had nothing to cover him there, and it was colder than on the river-bank; here he had nothing to cover him either, but at least he could make up the fire. . . .

In another week, when the floods were quite over and they set the ferry going, none of the ferrymen but Semyon would be wanted, and the Tatar would begin going from village to village begging for alms and for work. His wife was only seventeen; she was beautiful, spoilt, and shy; could she possibly go from village to village begging alms with her face unveiled? No, it was terrible even to think of that. . . .

It was already getting light; the barge, the bushes of willow on the water, and the waves could be clearly discerned, and if one looked round there was the steep clay slope; at the bottom of it the hut thatched with dingy brown straw, and

the huts of the village lay clustered higher up. The cocks were already crowing in the village.

The rusty red clay slope, the barge, the river, the strange, unkind people, hunger, cold, illness, perhaps all that was not real. Most likely it was all a dream, thought the Tatar. He felt that he was asleep and heard his own snoring. . . . Of course he was at home in the Simbirsk province, and he had only to call his wife by name for her to answer; and in the next room was his mother. . . . What terrible dreams there are, though! What are they for? The Tatar smiled and opened his eyes. What river was this, the Volga?

Snow was falling.

"Boat!" was shouted on the further side. "Boat!"

The Tatar woke up, and went to wake his mates and row over to the other side. The ferrymen came on to the river-bank, putting on their torn sheepskins as they walked, swearing with voices husky from sleepiness and shivering from the cold. On waking from their sleep, the river, from which came a breath of piercing cold, seemed to strike them as revolting and horrible. They jumped into the barge without hurrying themselves. . . . The Tatar and the three ferrymen took the long, broad-bladed oars, which in the darkness looked like the claws of crabs; Semyon leaned his stomach against the tiller. The shout on the other side still continued, and two shots were fired from a revolver, probably with the idea that the ferrymen were asleep or had gone to the pot-house in the village.

"All right, you have plenty of time," said Semyon in the tone of a man convinced that there was no necessity in this world to hurry—that it would lead to nothing, anyway.

The heavy, clumsy barge moved away from the bank and floated between the willow-bushes, and only the willows slowly moving back showed that the barge was not standing still but moving. The ferrymen swung the oars evenly in time; Semyon lay with his stomach on the tiller and, describing a semicircle in the air, flew from one side to the other. In the darkness it looked as though the men were sitting on some

antediluvian animal with long paws, and were moving on it through a cold, desolate land, the land of which one sometimes dreams in nightmares.

They passed beyond the willows and floated out into the open. The creak and regular splash of the oars was heard on the further shore, and a shout came: "Make haste! make haste!"

Another ten minutes passed, and the barge banged heavily against the landing-stage.

"And it keeps sprinkling and sprinkling," muttered Semyon, wiping the snow from his face; "and where it all comes from God only knows."

On the bank stood a thin man of medium height, in a jacket lined with fox-fur and in a white lambskin cap. He was standing at a little distance from his horses and not moving; he had a gloomy, concentrated expression, as though he were trying to remember something and angry with his untrustworthy memory. When Semyon went up to him and took off his cap, smiling, he said:

"I am hastening to Anastasyevka. My daughter's worse again, and they say that there is a new doctor at Anastasyevka."

They dragged the carriage on to the barge and floated back. The man whom Semyon addressed as Vassily Sergeyitch stood all the time motionless, tightly compressing his thick lips and staring off into space; when his coachman asked permission to smoke in his presence he made no answer, as though he had not heard. Semyon, lying with his stomach on the tiller, looked mockingly at him and said:

"Even in Siberia people can live—can li-ive!"

There was a triumphant expression on Canny's face, as though he had proved something and was delighted that things had happened as he had foretold. The unhappy helplessness of the man in the foxskin coat evidently afforded him great pleasure.

"It's muddy driving now, Vassily Sergeyitch," he said when the horses were harnessed again on the bank. "You should have put off going for another fortnight, when it will be drier.

Or else not have gone at all. . . . If any good would come of your going—but as you know yourself, people have been driving about for years and years, day and night, and it's always been no use. That's the truth."

Vassily Sergeyitch tipped him without a word, got into his carriage and drove off.

"There, he has galloped off for a doctor!" said Semyon, shrinking from the cold. "But looking for a good doctor is like chasing the wind in the fields or catching the devil by the tail, plague take your soul! What a queer chap, Lord forgive me a sinner!"

The Tatar went up to Canny, and, looking at him with hatred and repulsion, shivering, and mixing Tatar words with his broken Russian, said: "He is good . . . good; but you are bad! You are bad! The gentleman is a good soul, excellent, and you are a beast, bad! The gentleman is alive, but you are a dead carcass. . . . God created man to be alive, and to have joy and grief and sorrow; but you want nothing, so you are not alive, you are stone, clay! A stone wants nothing and you want nothing. You are a stone, and God does not love you, but He loves the gentleman!"

Everyone laughed; the Tatar frowned contemptuously, and with a wave of his hand wrapped himself in his rags and went to the camp-fire. The ferrymen and Semyon sauntered to the hut.

"It's cold," said one ferryman huskily as he stretched himself on the straw with which the damp clay floor was covered.

"Yes, it's not warm," another assented. "It's a dog's life. . . ."

They all lay down. The door was thrown open by the wind and the snow drifted into the hut; nobody felt inclined to get up and shut the door: they were cold, and it was too much trouble.

"I am all right," said Semyon as he began to doze. "I wouldn't wish anyone a better life."

"You are a tough one, we all know. Even the devils won't take you!"

Sounds like a dog's howling came from outside.

"What's that. Who's there?"

"It's the Tatar crying."

"I say. . . . He's a queer one!"

"He'll get u-used to it!" said Semyon, and at once fell asleep.

The others were soon asleep too. The door remained unclosed.

A STORY WITHOUT A TITLE

In the fifth century, just as now, the sun rose every morning and every evening retired to rest. In the morning, when the first rays kissed the dew, the earth revived, the air was filled with the sounds of rapture and hope; while in the evening the same earth subsided into silence and plunged into gloomy darkness. One day was like another, one night like another. From time to time a storm-cloud raced up and there was the angry rumble of thunder, or a negligent star fell out of the sky, or a pale monk ran to tell the brotherhood that not far from the monastery he had seen a tiger—and that was all, and then each day was like the next.

The monks worked and prayed, and their Father Superior played on the organ, made Latin verses, and wrote music. The wonderful old man possessed an extraordinary gift. He played on the organ with such art that even the oldest monks, whose hearing had grown somewhat dull towards the end of their lives, could not restrain their tears when the sounds of the organ floated from his cell. When he spoke of anything, even of the most ordinary things—for instance of the trees, of the wild beasts, or of the sea—they could not listen to him without a smile or tears, and it seemed that the same chords vibrated in his soul as in the organ. If he were moved to anger or abandoned himself to intense joy, or began speaking of something terrible or grand, then a passionate inspiration took possession of him, tears came into his flashing eyes, his face flushed, and his voice thundered, and as the monks listened to him they felt that their souls were spell-bound by his inspiration; at such marvellous, splendid moments his power over them was boundless, and if he had bidden his elders fling them-

selves into the sea, they would all, every one of them, have hastened to carry out his wishes.

His music, his voice, his poetry in which he glorified God, the heavens and the earth, were a continual source of joy to the monks. It sometimes happened that through the monotony of their lives they grew weary of the trees, the flowers, the spring, the autumn, their ears were tired of the sound of the sea, and the song of the birds seemed tedious to them, but the talents of their Father Superior were as necessary to them as their daily bread.

Dozens of years passed by, and every day was like every other day, every night was like every other night. Except the birds and the wild beasts, not one soul appeared near the monastery. The nearest human habitation was far away, and to reach it from the monastery, or to reach the monastery from it, meant a journey of over seventy miles across the desert. Only men who despised life, who had renounced it, and who came to the monastery as to the grave, ventured to cross the desert.

What was the amazement of the monks, therefore, when one night there knocked at their gate a man who turned out to be from the town, and the most ordinary sinner who loved life. Before saying his prayers and asking for the Father Superior's blessing, this man asked for wine and food. To the question how he had come from the town into the desert, he answered by a long story of hunting; he had gone out hunting, had drunk too much, and lost his way. To the suggestion that he should enter the monastery and save his soul, he replied with a smile: "I am not a fit companion for you!"

When he had eaten and drunk he looked at the monks who were serving him, shook his head reproachfully, and said:

"You don't do anything, you monks. You are good for nothing but eating and drinking. Is that the way to save one's soul? Only think, while you sit here in peace, eat and drink and dream of beatitude, your neighbours are perishing and going to hell. You should see what is going on in the town!

Some are dying of hunger, others, not knowing what to do with their gold, sink into profligacy and perish like flies stuck in honey. There is no faith, no truth in men. Whose task is it to save them? Whose work is it to preach to them? It is not for me, drunk from morning till night as I am. Can a meek spirit, a loving heart, and faith in God have been given you for you to sit here within four walls doing nothing?"

The townsman's drunken words were insolent and unseemly, but they had a strange effect upon the Father Superior. The old man exchanged glances with his monks, turned pale, and said:

"My brothers, he speaks the truth, you know. Indeed, poor people in their weakness and lack of understanding are perishing in vice and infidelity, while we do not move, as though it did not concern us. Why should I not go and remind them of the Christ whom they have forgotten?"

The townsman's words had carried the old man away. The next day he took his staff, said farewell to the brotherhood, and set off for the town. And the monks were left without music, and without his speeches and verses. They spent a month drearily, then a second, but the old man did not come back. At last after three months had passed the familiar tap of his staff was heard. The monks flew to meet him and showered questions upon him, but instead of being delighted to see them he wept bitterly and did not utter a word. The monks noticed that he looked greatly aged and had grown thinner; his face looked exhausted and wore an expression of profound sadness, and when he wept he had the air of a man who has been outraged.

The monks fell to weeping too, and began with sympathy asking him why he was weeping, why his face was so gloomy, but he locked himself in his cell without uttering a word. For seven days he sat in his cell, eating and drinking nothing, weeping and not playing on his organ. To knocking at his door and to the entreaties of the monks to come out and share his grief with them he replied with unbroken silence.

At last he came out. Gathering all the monks around him,

with a tear-stained face and with an expression of grief and indignation, he began telling them of what had befallen him during those three months. His voice was calm and his eyes were smiling while he described his journey from the monastery to the town. On the road, he told them, the birds sang to him, the brooks gurgled, and sweet youthful hopes agitated his soul; he marched on and felt like a soldier going to battle and confident of victory; he walked on dreaming, and composed poems and hymns, and reached the end of his journey without noticing it.

But his voice quivered, his eyes flashed, and he was full of wrath when he came to speak of the town and of the men in it. Never in his life had he seen or even dared to imagine what he met with when he went into the town. Only then for the first time in his life, in his old age, he saw and understood how powerful was the devil, how fair was evil and how weak and faint-hearted and worthless were men. By an unhappy chance the first dwelling he entered was the abode of vice. Some fifty men in possession of much money were eating and drinking wine beyond measure. Intoxicated by the wine, they sang songs and boldly uttered terrible, revolting words such as a God-fearing man could not bring himself to pronounce; boundlessly free, self-confident, and happy, they feared neither God nor the devil, nor death, but said and did what they liked, and went whither their lust led them. And the wine, clear as amber, flecked with sparks of gold, must have been irresistibly sweet and fragrant, for each man who drank it smiled blissfully and wanted to drink more. To the smile of man it responded with a smile and sparkled joyfully when they drank it, as though it knew the devilish charm it kept hidden in its sweetness.

The old man, growing more and more incensed and weeping with wrath, went on to describe what he had seen. On a table in the midst of the revellers, he said, stood a sinful, half-naked woman. It was hard to imagine or to find in nature anything more lovely and fascinating. This reptile, young, long-haired, dark-skinned, with black eyes and full lips, shame-

less and insolent, showed her snow-white teeth and smiled as though to say: "Look how shameless, how beautiful I am." Silk and brocade fell in lovely folds from her shoulders, but her beauty would not hide itself under her clothes, but eagerly thrust itself through the folds, like the young grass through the ground in spring. The shameless woman drank wine, sang songs, and abandoned herself to anyone who wanted her.

Then the old man, wrathfully brandishing his arms, described the horse-races, the bull-fights, the theatres, the artists' studios where they painted naked women or moulded them of clay. He spoke with inspiration, with sonorous beauty, as though he were playing on unseen chords, while the monks, petrified, greedily drank in his words and gasped with rapture. . . .

After describing all the charms of the devil, the beauty of evil, and the fascinating grace of the dreadful female form, the old man cursed the devil, turned and shut himself up in his cell. . . .

When he came out of his cell in the morning there was not a monk left in the monastery; they had all fled to the town.

ART

A GLOOMY winter morning.

On the smooth and glittering surface of the river Bystryanka, sprinkled here and there with snow, stand two peasants, scrubby little Seryozhka and the church beadle, Matvey. Seryozhka, a short-legged, ragged, mangy-looking fellow of thirty, stares angrily at the ice. Tufts of wool hang from his shaggy sheepskin like a mangy dog. In his hands he holds a compass made of two pointed sticks. Matvey, a fine-looking old man in a new sheepskin and high felt boots, looks with mild blue eyes upwards where on the high sloping bank a village nestles picturesquely. In his hands there is a heavy crowbar.

"Well, are we going to stand like this till evening with our arms folded?" says Seryozhka, breaking the silence and turning his angry eyes on Matvey. "Have you come here to stand about, old fool, or to work?"

"Well, you . . . er . . . show me . . ." Matvey mutters, blinking mildly.

"Show you. . . . It's always me: me to show you, and me to do it. They have no sense of their own! Mark it out with the compasses, that's what's wanted! You can't break the ice without marking it out. Mark it! Take the compass." Matvey takes the compasses from Seryozhka's hands, and, shuffling heavily on the same spot and jerking with his elbows in all directions, he begins awkwardly trying to describe a circle on the ice. Seryozhka screws up his eyes contemptuously and obviously enjoys his awkwardness and incompetence.

"Eh-eh-eh!" he mutters angrily. "Even that you can't do!

The fact is, you are a stupid peasant, a wooden-head! You ought to be grazing geese and not making a Jordan! Give the compasses here! Give them here, I say!"

Seryozhka snatches the compasses out of the hands of the perspiring Matvey, and in an instant, jauntily twirling round on one heel, he describes a circle on the ice. The outline of the new Jordan is ready now, all that is left to do is to break the ice. . . .

But before proceeding to the work Seryozhka spends a long time in airs and graces, whims and reproaches. . . .

"I am not obliged to work for you! You are employed in the church, you do it!"

He obviously enjoys the peculiar position in which he has been placed by the fate that has bestowed on him the rare talent of surprising the whole parish once a year by his art. Poor mild Matvey has to listen to many venomous and contemptuous words from him. Seryozhka sets to work with vexation, with anger. He is lazy. He has hardly described the circle when he is already itching to go up to the village to drink tea, lounge about, and babble. . . .

"I'll be back directly," he says, lighting his cigarette, "and meanwhile you had better bring something to sit on and sweep up, instead of standing there counting the crows."

Matvey is left alone. The air is grey and harsh but still. The white church peeps out genially from behind the huts scattered on the river bank. Jackdaws are incessantly circling round its golden crosses. On one side of the village where the river bank breaks off and is steep a hobbled horse is standing at the very edge, motionless as a stone, probably asleep or deep in thought.

Matvey, too, stands motionless as a statue, waiting patiently. The dreamily brooding look of the river, the circling of the jackdaws, and the sight of the horse make him drowsy. One hour passes, a second, and still Seryozhka does not come. The river has long been swept and a box brought to sit on, but the drunken fellow does not appear. Matvey waits and merely yawns. The feeling of boredom is one of which he knows

nothing. If he were told to stand on the river for a day, a month, or a year he would stand there.

At last Seryozhka comes into sight from behind the huts. He walks with a lurching gait, scarcely moving. He is too lazy to go the long way round, and he comes not by the road, but prefers a short cut in a straight line down the bank, and sticks in the snow, hangs on to the bushes, slides on his back as he comes—and all this slowly, with pauses.

"What are you about?" he cries, falling on Matvey at once. "Why are you standing there doing nothing! When are you going to break ice?"

Matvey crosses himself, takes the crowbar in both hands, and begins breaking the ice, carefully keeping to the circle that has been drawn. Seryozhka sits down on the box and watches the heavy clumsy movements of his assistant.

"Easy at the edges! Easy there!" he commands. "If you can't do it properly, you shouldn't undertake it, once you have undertaken it you should do it. You!"

A crowd collects on the top of the bank. At the sight of the spectators Seryozhka becomes even more excited.

"I declare I am not going to do it . . ." he says, lighting a stinking cigarette and spitting on the ground. "I should like to see how you get on without me. Last year at Kostyukovo, Styopka Gulkov undertook to make a Jordan as I do. And what did it amount to—it was a laughing-stock. The Kostyukovo folks came to ours—crowds and crowds of them! The people flocked from all the villages."

"Because except for ours there is nowhere a proper Jordan . . ."

"Work, there is no time for talking. . . . Yes, old man . . . you won't find another Jordan like it in the whole province. The soldiers say you would look in vain, they are not so good even in the towns. Easy, easy!"

Matvey puffs and groans. The work is not easy. The ice is firm and thick; and he has to break it and at once take the pieces away that the open space may not be blocked up.

But, hard as the work is and senseless as Seryozhka's com-

mands are, by three o'clock there is a large circle of dark water in the Bystryanka.

"It was better last year," says Seryozhka angrily. "You can't do even that! Ah, dummy! To keep such fools in the temple of God! Go and bring a board to make the pegs! Bring the ring, you crow! And er . . . get some bread somewhere . . . and some cucumbers, or something."

Matvey goes off and soon afterwards comes back, carrying on his shoulders an immense wooden ring which had been painted in previous years in patterns of various colours. In the centre of the ring is a red cross, at the circumference holes for the pegs. Seryozhka takes the ring and covers the hole in the ice with it.

"Just right . . . it fits. . . . We have only to renew the paint and it will be first-rate. . . . Come, why are you standing still? Make the lectern. Or—er—go and get logs to make the cross . . ."

Matvey, who has not tasted food or drink all day, trudges up the hill again. Lazy as Seryozhka is, he makes the pegs with his own hands. He knows that those pegs have a miraculous power: whoever gets hold of a peg after the blessing of the water will be lucky for the whole year. Such work is really worth doing.

But the real work begins the following day. Then Seryozhka displays himself before the ignorant Matvey in all the greatness of his talent. There is no end to his babble, his fault-finding, his whims and fancies. If Matvey nails two big pieces of wood to make a cross, he is dissatisfied and tells him to do it again. If Matvey stands still, Seryozhka asks him angrily why he does not go; if he moves, Seryozhka shouts to him not to go away but to do his work. He is not satisfied with his tools, with the weather, or with his own talent; nothing pleases him.

Matvey saws out a great piece of ice for a lectern.

"Why have you broken off the corner?" cries Seryozhka, and glares at him furiously. "Why have you broken off the corner? I ask you."

"Forgive me, for Christ's sake."

"Do it over again!"

Matvey saws again . . . and there is no end to his sufferings. A lectern is to stand by the hole in the ice that is covered by the painted ring; on the lectern is to be carved the cross and the open gospel. But that is not all. Behind the lectern there is to be a high cross to be seen by all the crowd and to glitter in the sun as though sprinkled with diamonds and rubies. On the cross is to be a dove carved out of ice. The path from the church to the Jordan is to be strewn with branches of fir and juniper. All this is their task.

First of all Seryozhka sets to work on the lectern. He works with a file, a chisel, and an awl. He is perfectly successful in the cross on the lectern, the gospel, and the drapery that hangs down from the lectern. Then he begins on the dove. While he is trying to carve an expression of meekness and humility on the face of the dove, Matvey, lumbering about like a bear, is coating with ice the cross he has made of wood. He takes the cross and dips it in the hole. Waiting till the water has frozen on the cross he dips it in a second time, and so on till the cross is covered with a thick layer of ice. . . . It is a difficult job, calling for a great deal of strength and patience.

But now the delicate work is finished. Seryozhka races about the village like one possessed. He swears and vows he will go at once to the river and smash all his work. He is looking for suitable paints.

His pockets are full of ochre, dark blue, red lead, and verdigris; without paying a farthing he rushes headlong from one shop to another. The shop is next door to the tavern. Here he has a drink; with a wave of his hand he darts off without paying. At one hut he gets beetroot leaves, at another an onion skin, out of which he makes a yellow colour. He swears, shoves, threatens, and . . . not a soul murmurs! They all smile at him, they sympathise with him, call him Sergey Nikititch; they all feel that his art is not his personal affair but something that concerns them all, the whole people. One creates, the others help him. Seryozhka in himself is a nonentity, a sluggard, a drunkard, and a wastrel, but when he has

his red lead or compasses in his hand he is at once something higher, a servant of God.

Epiphany morning comes. The precincts of the church and both banks of the river for a long distance are swarming with people. Everything that makes up the Jordan is scrupulously concealed under new mats. Seryozhka is meekly moving about near the mats, trying to control his emotion. He sees thousands of people. There are many here from other parishes; these people have come many a mile on foot through the frost and the snow merely to see his celebrated Jordan. Matvey, who had finished his coarse, rough work, is by now back in the church, there is no sight, no sound of him; he is already forgotten. . . . The weather is lovely. . . . There is not a cloud in the sky. The sunshine is dazzling.

The church bells ring out on the hill . . . Thousands of heads are bared, thousands of hands are moving, there are thousands of signs of the cross!

And Seryozhka does not know what to do with himself for impatience. But now they are ringing the bells for the Sacrament; then half an hour later a certain agitation is perceptible in the belfry and among the people. Banners are borne out of the church one after the other, while the bells peal in joyous haste. Seryozhka, trembling, pulls away the mat . . . and the people behold something extraordinary. The lectern, the wooden ring, the pegs, and the cross in the ice are iridescent with thousands of colors. The cross and the dove glitter so dazzlingly that it hurts the eyes to look at them. Merciful God, how fine it is! A murmur of wonder and delight runs through the crowd; the bells peal more loudly still, the day grows brighter; the banners oscillate and move over the crowd as over the waves. The procession, glittering with the settings of the ikons and the vestments of the clergy, comes slowly down the road and turns towards the Jordan. Hands are waved to the belfry for the ringing to cease, and the blessing of the water begins. The priests conduct the service slowly, deliberately, evidently trying to prolong the ceremony and the joy of praying all gathered together. There is perfect stillness.

But now they plunge the cross in, and the air echoes with an extraordinary din. Guns are fired, the bells peal furiously, loud exclamations of delight, shouts, and a rush to get the pegs. Seryozhka listens to this uproar, sees thousands of eyes fixed upon him, and the lazy fellow's soul is filled with a sense of glory and triumph.

THE STUDENT

At first the weather was fine and still. The thrushes were calling, and in the swamps close by something alive droned pitifully with a sound like blowing into an empty bottle. A snipe flew by, and the shot aimed at it rang out with a gay, resounding note in the spring air. But when it began to get dark in the forest a cold, penetrating wind blew inappropriately from the east, and everything sank into silence. Needles of ice stretched across the pools, and it felt cheerless, remote, and lonely in the forest. There was a whiff of winter.

Ivan Velikopolsky, the son of a sacristan, and a student of the clerical academy, returning home from shooting, walked all the time by the path in the water-side meadow. His fingers were numb and his face was burning with the wind. It seemed to him that the cold that had suddenly come on had destroyed the order and harmony of things, that nature itself felt ill at ease, and that was why the evening darkness was falling more rapidly than usual. All around it was deserted and peculiarly gloomy. The only light was one gleaming in the widows' gardens near the river; the village, over three miles away, and everything in the distance all round was plunged in the cold evening mist. The student remembered that, as he went out from the house, his mother was sitting barefoot on the floor in the entry, cleaning the samovar, while his father lay on the stove coughing; as it was Good Friday nothing had been cooked, and the student was terribly hungry. And now, shrinking from the cold, he thought that just such a wind had blown in the days of Rurik and in the time of Ivan the Terrible and Peter, and in their time there had been just the same desperate poverty and hunger, the same thatched roofs with holes in them, ignorance, misery, the same desolation around, the same

darkness, the same feeling of oppression—all these had existed, did exist, and would exist, and the lapse of a thousand years would make life no better. And he did not want to go home.

The gardens were called the widows' because they were kept by two widows, mother and daughter. A camp fire was burning brightly with a crackling sound, throwing out light far around on the ploughed earth. The widow Vasilisa, a tall, fat old woman in a man's coat, was standing by and looking thoughtfully into the fire; her daughter Lukerya, a little pock-marked woman with a stupid-looking face, was sitting on the ground, washing a caldron and spoons. Apparently they had just had supper. There was a sound of men's voices; it was the labourers watering their horses at the river.

"Here you have winter back again," said the student, going up to the camp fire. "Good evening."

Vasilisa started, but at once recognized him and smiled cordially.

"I did not know you; God bless you," she said. "You'll be rich."

They talked. Vasilisa, a woman of experience, who had been in service with the gentry, first as a wet-nurse, afterwards as a children's nurse, expressed herself with refinement, and a soft, sedate smile never left her face; her daughter Lukerya, a village peasant woman, who had been crushed by her husband, simply screwed up her eyes at the student and said nothing, and she had a strange expression like that of a deaf mute.

"At just such a fire the Apostle Peter warmed himself," said the student, stretching out his hands to the fire, "so it must have been cold then, too. Ah, what a terrible night it must have been, granny! An utterly dismal long night!"

He looked round at the darkness, shook his head abruptly and asked:

"No doubt you have been at the reading of the Twelve Gospels?"

"Yes, I have," answered Vasilisa.

"If you remember at the Last Supper Peter said to Jesus, 'I am ready to go with Thee into darkness and unto death.'

And our Lord answered him thus: 'I say unto thee, Peter, before the cock croweth thou wilt have denied Me thrice.' After the supper Jesus went through the agony of death in the garden and prayed, and poor Peter was weary in spirit and faint, his eyelids were heavy and he could not struggle against sleep. He fell asleep. Then you heard how Judas the same night kissed Jesus and betrayed Him to His tormentors. They took Him bound to the high priest and beat Him, while Peter, exhausted, worn out with misery and alarm, hardly awake, you know, feeling that something awful was just going to happen on earth, followed behind. . . . He loved Jesus passionately, intensely, and now he saw from far off how He was beaten. . . ."

Lukerya left the spoons and fixed an immovable stare upon the student.

"They came to the high priest's," he went on; "they began to question Jesus, and meantime the labourers made a fire in the yard as it was cold, and warmed themselves. Peter, too, stood with them near the fire and warmed himself as I am doing. A woman, seeing him, said: 'He was with Jesus, too'—that is as much as to say that he, too, should be taken to be questioned. And all the labourers that were standing near the fire must have looked sourly and suspiciously at him, because he was confused and said: 'I don't know Him.' A little while after again someone recognized him as one of Jesus' disciples and said: 'Thou, too, art one of them,' but again he denied it. And for the third time someone turned to him: 'Why, did I not see thee with Him in the garden to-day?' For the third time he denied it. And immediately after that time the cock crowed, and Peter, looking from afar off at Jesus, remembered the words He had said to him in the evening. . . . He remembered, he came to himself, went out of the yard and wept bitterly—bitterly. In the Gospel it is written: 'He went out and wept bitterly.' I imagine it: the still, still, dark, dark garden, and in the stillness, faintly audible, smothered sobbing. . . ."

The student sighed and sank into thought. Still smiling,

Vasilisa suddenly gave a gulp, big tears flowed freely down her cheeks, and she screened her face from the fire with her sleeve as though ashamed of her tears, and Lukerya, staring immovably at the student, flushed crimson, and her expression became strained and heavy like that of someone enduring intense pain.

The labourers came back from the river, and one of them riding a horse was quite near, and the light from the fire quivered upon him. The student said good-night to the widows and went on. And again the darkness was about him and his fingers began to be numb. A cruel wind was blowing, winter really had come back and it did not feel as though Easter would be the day after to-morrow.

Now the student was thinking about Vasilisa: since she had shed tears all that had happened to Peter the night before the Crucifixion must have some relation to her. . . .

He looked round. The solitary light was still gleaming in the darkness and no figures could be seen near it now. The student thought again that if Vasilisa had shed tears, and her daughter had been troubled, it was evident that what he had just been telling them about, which had happened nineteen centuries ago, had a relation to the present—to both women, to the desolate village, to himself, to all people. The old woman had wept, not because he could tell the story touchingly, but because Peter was near to her, because her whole being was interested in what was passing in Peter's soul.

And joy suddenly stirred in his soul, and he even stopped for a minute to take breath. "The past," he thought, "is linked with the present by an unbroken chain of events flowing one out of another." And it seemed to him that he had just seen both ends of that chain; that when he touched one end the other quivered.

When he crossed the river by the ferry boat and afterwards, mounting the hill, looked at his village and towards the west where the cold purple sunset lay a narrow streak of light, he thought that truth and beauty which had guided

human life there in the garden and in the yard of the high priest had continued without interruption to this day, and had evidently always been the chief thing in human life and in all earthly life, indeed; and the feeling of youth, health, vigour—he was only twenty-two—and the inexpressible sweet expectation of happiness, of unknown mysterious happiness, took possession of him little by little, and life seemed to him enchanting, marvellous, and full of lofty meaning.

ABOUT LOVE

At lunch next day there were very nice pies, crayfish, and mutton cutlets; and while we were eating, Nikanor, the cook, came up to ask what the visitors would like for dinner. He was a man of medium height, with a puffy face and little eyes; he was close-shaven, and it looked as though his moustaches had not been shaved, but had been pulled out by the roots. Alehin told us that the beautiful Pelagea was in love with this cook. As he drank and was of a violent character, she did not want to marry him, but was willing to live with him without. He was very devout, and his religious convictions would not allow him to "live in sin"; he insisted on her marrying him, and would consent to nothing else, and when he was drunk he used to abuse her and even beat her. Whenever he got drunk she used to hide upstairs and sob, and on such occasions Alehin and the servants stayed in the house to be ready to defend her in case of necessity.

We began talking about love.

"How love is born," said Alehin, "why Pelagea does not love somebody more like herself in her spiritual and external qualities, and why she fell in love with Nikanor, that ugly snout —we all call him 'The Snout'—how far questions of personal happiness are of consequence in love—all that is unknown; one can take what view one likes of it. So far only one incontestable truth has been uttered about love: 'This is a great mystery.' Everything else that has been written or said about love is not a conclusion, but only a statement of questions which have remained unanswered. The explanation which would seem to fit one case does not apply in a dozen others, and the very best thing, to my mind, would be to explain every case individually

without attempting to generalize. We ought, as the doctors say, to individualize each case."

"Perfectly true," Burkin assented.

"We Russians of the educated class have a partiality for these questions that remain unanswered. Love is usually poeticized, decorated with roses, nightingales; we Russians decorate our loves with these momentous questions, and select the most uninteresting of them, too. In Moscow, when I was a student, I had a friend who shared my life, a charming lady, and every time I took her in my arms she was thinking what I would allow her a month for housekeeping and what was the price of beef a pound. In the same way, when we are in love we are never tired of asking ourselves questions: whether it is honourable or dishonourable, sensible or stupid, what this love is leading up to, and so on. Whether it is a good thing or not I don't know, but that it is in the way, unsatisfactory, and irritating, I do know."

It looked as though he wanted to tell some story. People who lead a solitary existence always have something in their hearts which they are eager to talk about. In town bachelors visit the baths and the restaurants on purpose to talk, and sometimes tell the most interesting things to bath attendants and waiters; in the country, as a rule, they unbosom themselves to their guests. Now from the window we could see a grey sky, trees drenched in the rain; in such weather we could go nowhere, and there was nothing for us to do but to tell stories and to listen.

"I have lived at Sofino and been farming for a long time," Alehin began, "ever since I left the University. I am an idle gentleman by education, a studious person by disposition; but there was a big debt owing on the estate when I came here, and as my father was in debt partly because he had spent so much on my education, I resolved not to go away, but to work till I paid off the debt. I made up my mind to this and set to work, not, I must confess, without some repugnance. The land here does not yield much, and if one is not to farm at a loss one must employ serf labour or hired labourers, which is almost the

same thing, or put it on a peasant footing—that is, work the fields oneself and with one's family. There is no middle path. But in those days I did not go into such subtleties. I did not leave a clod of earth unturned; I gathered together all the peasants, men and women, from the neighbouring villages; the work went on at a tremendous pace. I myself ploughed and sowed and reaped, and was bored doing it, and frowned with disgust, like a village cat driven by hunger to eat cucumbers in the kitchen-garden. My body ached, and I slept as I walked. At first it seemed to me that I could easily reconcile this life of toil with my cultured habits; to do so, I thought, all that is necessary is to maintain a certain external order in life. I established myself upstairs here in the best rooms, and ordered them to bring me there coffee and liquor after lunch and dinner, and when I went to bed I read every night the *Vyestnik Evropi*. But one day our priest, Father Ivan, came and drank up all my liquor at one sitting; and the *Vyestnik Evropi* went to the priest's daughters; as in the summer, especially at the haymaking, I did not succeed in getting to my bed at all, and slept in the sledge in the barn, or somewhere in the forester's lodge, what chance was there of reading? Little by little I moved downstairs, began dining in the servants' kitchen, and of my former luxury nothing is left but the servants who were in my father's service, and whom it would be painful to turn away.

"In the first years I was elected here an honourary justice of the peace. I used to have to go to the town and take part in the sessions of the congress and of the circuit court, and this was a pleasant change for me. When you live here for two or three months without a break, especially in the winter, you begin at last to pine for a black coat. And in the circuit court there were frock-coats, and uniforms, and dress-coats, too, all lawyers, men who have received a general education; I had some one to talk to. After sleeping in the sledge and dining in the kitchen, to sit in an arm-chair in clean linen, in thin boots, with a chain on one's waistcoat, is such luxury!

"I received a warm welcome in the town. I made friends

eagerly. And of all my acquaintanceships the most intimate and, to tell the truth, the most agreeable to me was my acquaintance with Luganovitch, the vice-president of the circuit court. You both know him: a most charming personality. It all happened just after a celebrated case of incendiarism; the preliminary investigation lasted two days; we were exhausted. Luganovitch looked at me and said:

" 'Look here, come round to dinner with me.'

"This was unexpected, as I knew Luganovitch very little, only officially, and I had never been to his house. I only just went to my hotel room to change and went off to dinner. And here it was my lot to meet Anna Alexyevna, Luganovitch's wife. At that time she was still very young, not more than twenty-two, and her first baby had been born just six months before. It is all a thing of the past; and now I should find it difficult to define what there was so exceptional in her, what it was in her attracted me so much; at the time, at dinner, it was all perfectly clear to me. I saw a lovely young, good, intelligent, fascinating woman, such as I had never met before; and I felt her at once some one close and already familiar, as though that face, those cordial, intelligent eyes, I had seen somewhere in my childhood, in the album which lay on my mother's chest of drawers.

"Four Jews were charged with being incendiaries, were regarded as a gang of robbers, and, to my mind, quite groundlessly. At dinner I was very much excited, I was uncomfortable, and I don't know what I said, but Anna Alexyevna kept shaking her head and saying to her husband:

" 'Dmitry, how is this?'

"Luganovitch is a good-natured man, one of those simple-hearted people who firmly maintain the opinion that once a man is charged before a court he is guilty, and to express doubt of the correctness of a sentence cannot be done except in legal form on paper, and not at dinner and in private conversation.

" 'You and I did not set fire to the place,' he said softly, 'and you see we are not condemned, and not in prison.'

"And both husband and wife tried to make me eat and drink

as much as possible. From some trifling details, from the way they made the coffee together, for instance, and from the way they understood each other at half a word, I could gather that they lived in harmony and comfort, and that they were glad of a visitor. After dinner they played a duet on the piano; then it got dark, and I went home. That was at the beginning of spring.

"After that I spent the whole summer at Sofino without a break, and I had no time to think of the town, either, but the memory of the graceful fair-haired woman remained in my mind all those days; I did not think of her, but it was as though her light shadow were lying on my heart.

"In the late autumn there was a theatrical performance for some charitable object in the town. I went into the governor's box (I was invited to go there in the interval); I looked, and there was Anna Alexyevna sitting beside the governor's wife; and again the same irresistible, thrilling impression of beauty and sweet, caressing eyes, and again the same feeling of nearness. We sat side by side, then went to the foyer.

" 'You've grown thinner,' said she; 'have you been ill?'

" 'Yes, I've had rheumatism in my shoulder, and in rainy weather I can't sleep.'

" 'You look dispirited. In the spring, when you came to dinner, you were younger, more confident. You were full of eagerness, and talked a great deal then; you were very interesting, and I really must confess I was a little carried away by you. For some reason you often came back to my memory during the summer, and when I was getting ready for the theatre today I thought I should see you.'

"And she laughed.

" 'But you look dispirited today,' she repeated; 'it makes you seem older.'

"The next day I lunched at the Luganovitchs'. After lunch they drove out to their summer villa, in order to make arrangements there for the winter, and I went with them. I returned with them to the town, and at midnight drank tea with them

in quiet domestic surroundings, while the fire glowed, and the young mother kept going to see if the baby girl was asleep. And after that, every time I went to town I never failed to visit the Luganovitchs. They grew used to me, and I grew used to them. As a rule I went in unannounced, as though I were one of the family.

"'Who is there?' I would hear from a faraway room, in the drawling voice that seemed to me so lovely.

"'It is Pavel Konstantinovitch,' answered the maid or the nurse.

"Anna Alexyevna would come out to me with an anxious face, and would ask every time:

"'Why is it so long since you have been?' Has anything happened?'

"Her eyes, the elegant refined hand she gave me, her indoor dress, the way she did her hair, her voice, her step, always produced the same impression on me of something new and extraordinary in my life, and very important. We talked together for hours, were silent, thinking each our own thoughts, or she played for hours to me on the piano. If there were no one at home I stayed and waited, talked to the nurse, played with the child, or lay on the sofa in the study and read; and when Anna Alexyevna came back I met her in the hall, took all her parcels from her, and for some reason I carried those parcels every time with as much love, with as much solemnity, as a boy.

"There is a proverb that if a peasant woman has no troubles she will buy a pig. The Luganovitchs had no troubles, so they made friends with me. If I did not come to the town I must be ill or something must have happened to me, and both of them were extremely anxious. They were worried that I, an educated man with a knowledge of languages, should, instead of devoting myself to science or literary work, live in the country, rush round like a squirrel in a rage, work hard with never a penny to show for it. They fancied that I was unhappy, and that I only talked, laughed, and ate to conceal my sufferings, and even at cheerful moments when I felt

happy I was aware of their searching eyes fixed upon me. They were particularly touching when I really was depressed, when I was being worried by some creditor or had not money enough to pay interest on the proper day. The two of them, husband and wife, would whisper together at the window; then he would come to me and say with a grave face:

" 'If you really are in need of money at the moment, Pavel Konstantinovitch, my wife and I beg you not to hesitate to borrow from us.'

"And he would blush to his ears with emotion. And it would happen that, after whispering in the same way at the window, he would come up to me, with red ears, and say:

" 'My wife and I earnestly beg you to accept this present.'

"And he would give me studs, a cigar-case, or a lamp, and I would send them game, butter, and flowers from the country. They both, by the way, had considerable means of their own. In early days I often borrowed money, and was not very particular about it—borrowed wherever I could—but nothing in the world would have induced me to borrow from the Luganovitchs. But why talk of it?

"I was unhappy. At home, in the fields, in the barn, I thought of her; I tried to understand the mystery of a beautiful, intelligent young woman's marrying some one so uninteresting, almost an old man (her husband was over forty), and having children by him; to understand the mystery of this uninteresting, good, simple-hearted man, who argued with such wearisome good sense, at balls and evening parties kept near the more solid people, looking listless and superfluous, with a submissive, uninterested expression, as though he had been brought there for sale, who yet believed in his right to be happy, to have children by her; and I kept trying to understand why she had met him first and not me, and why such a terrible mistake in our lives need have happened.

"And when I went to the town I saw every time from her eyes that she was expecting me, and she would confess to me herself that she had had a peculiar feeling all that day and had guessed that I should come. We talked a long

time, and were silent, yet we did not confess our love to each other, but timidly and jealously concealed it. We were afraid of everything that might reveal our secret to ourselves. I loved her tenderly, deeply, but I reflected and kept asking myself what our love could lead to if we had not the strength to fight against it. It seemed to be incredible that my gentle, sad love could all at once coarsely break up the even tenor of the life of her husband, her children, and all the household in which I was so loved and trusted. Would it be honourable? She would go away with me, but where? Where could I take her? It would have been a different matter if I had had a beautiful, interesting life—if, for instance, I had been struggling for the emancipation of my country, or had been a celebrated man of science, an artist or a painter; but as it was it would mean taking her from one everyday humdrum life to another as humdrum or perhaps more so. And how long would our happiness last? What would happen to her in case I was ill, in case I died, or if we simply grew cold to one another?

"And she apparently reasoned in the same way. She thought of her husband, her children, and of her mother, who loved the husband like a son. If she abandoned herself to her feelings she would have to lie, or else to tell the truth, and in her position either would have been equally terrible and inconvenient. And she was tormented by the question whether her love would bring me happiness—would she not complicate my life, which, as it was, was hard enough and full of all sorts of trouble? She fancied she was not young enough for me, that she was not industrious nor energetic enough to begin a new life, and she often talked to her husband of the importance of my marrying a girl of intelligence and merit who would be a capable housewife and a help to me—and she would immediately add that it would be difficult to find such a girl in the whole town.

"Meanwhile the years were passing. Anna Alexyevna already had two children. When I arrived at the Luganovitchs'

the servants smiled cordially, the children shouted that Uncle Pavel Konstantinovitch had come, and hung on my neck; every one was overjoyed. They did not understand what was passing in my soul, and thought that I, too, was happy. Every one looked on me as a noble being. And grown-ups and children alike felt that a noble being was walking about their rooms, and that gave a peculiar charm to their manner towards me, as though in my presence their life, too, was purer and more beautiful. Anna Alexyevna and I used to go to the theatre together, always walking there; we used to sit side by side in the stalls, our shoulders touching. I would take the opera-glass from her hands without a word, and feel at that minute that she was near me, that she was mine, that we could not live without each other; but by some strange misunderstanding, when we came out of the theatre we always said good-bye and parted as though we were strangers. Goodness knows what people were saying about us in the town already, but there was not a word of truth in it all!

"In the latter years Anna Alexyevna took to going away for frequent visits to her mother or to her sister; she began to suffer from low spirits, she began to recognize that her life was spoilt and unsatisfied, and at times she did not care to see her husband nor her children. She was already being treated for neurasthenia.

"We were silent and still silent, and in the presence of outsiders she displayed a strange irritation in regard to me; whatever I talked about, she disagreed with me, and if I had an argument she sided with my opponent. If I dropped anything, she would say coldly:

" 'I congratulate you.'

"If I forgot to take the opera-glass when we were going to the theatre, she would say afterwards:

" 'I knew you would forget it.'

"Luckily or unluckily, there is nothing in our lives that does not end sooner or later. The time of parting came, as Luganovitch was appointed president in one of the western provinces. They had to sell their furniture, their horses, their

summer villa. When they drove out to the villa, and afterwards looked back as they were going away, to look for the last time at the garden, at the green roof, every one was sad, and I realized that I had to say good-bye not only to the villa. It was arranged that at the end of August we should see Anna Alexyevna off to the Crimea, where the doctors were sending her, and that a little later Luganovitch and the children would set off for the western province.

"We were a great crowd to see Anna Alexyevna off. When she had said good-bye to her husband and her children and there was only a minute left before the third bell, I ran into her compartment to put a basket, which she had almost forgotten, on the rack, and I had to say good-bye. When our eyes met in the compartment our spiritual fortitude deserted us both; I took her in my arms, she pressed her face to my breast, and tears flowed from her eyes. Kissing her face, her shoulders, her hands wet with tears—oh, how unhappy we were!—I confessed my love for her, and with a burning pain in my heart I realized how unnecessary, how petty, and how deceptive all that had hindered us from loving was. I understood that when you love you must either, in your reasonings about that love, start from what is highest, from what is more important than happiness, or unhappiness, sin or virtue in their accepted meaning, or you must not reason at all.

"I kissed her for the last time, pressed her hand, and parted for ever. The train had already started. I went into the next compartment—it was empty—and until I reached the next station I sat there crying. Then I walked home to Sofino. . . ."

While Alehin was telling his story, the rain left off and the sun came out. Burkin and Ivan Ivanovitch went out on the balcony, from which there was a beautiful view over the garden and the mill-pond, which was shining now in the sunshine like a mirror. They admired it, and at the same time they were sorry that this man with the kind, clever eyes, who had told them this story with such genuine feeling, should be rushing round and round this huge estate like a squirrel on a

wheel instead of devoting himself to science or something else which would have made his life more pleasant; and they thought what a sorrowful face Anna Alexyevna must have had when he said good-bye to her in the railway-carriage and kissed her face and shoulders. Both of them had met her in the town, and Burkin knew her and thought her beautiful.

VOLODYA

At five o'clock one Sunday afternoon in summer, Volodya, a plain, shy, sickly looking lad of seventeen, was sitting in the arbour of the Shumihins' country villa, feeling dreary. His despondent thoughts flowed in three directions. In the first place, he had next day, Monday, an examination in mathematics; he knew that if he did not get through the written examination on the morrow, he would be expelled, for he had already been two years in the sixth form and had two and three-quarter marks for algebra in his annual report. In the second place, his presence at the villa of the Shumihins, a wealthy family with aristocratic pretensions, was a continual source of mortification to his amour-propre. It seemed to him that Madame Shumihin looked upon him and his *maman* as poor relations and dependents, that they laughed at his *maman* and did not respect her. He had on one occasion accidentally overheard Madame Shumihin, in the verandah, telling her cousin Anna Fyodorovna that his *maman* still tried to look young and got herself up, that she never paid her losses at cards, and had a partiality for other people's shoes and tobacco. Every day Volodya besought his *maman* not to go to the Shumihins', and drew a picture of the humiliating part she played with these gentlefolk. He tried to persuade her, said rude things, but she—a frivolous, pampered woman, who had run through two fortunes, her own and her husband's, in her time, and always gravitated towards acquaintances of high rank—did not understand him, and twice a week Volodya had to accompany her to the villa he hated.

In the third place, the youth could not for one instant get rid of a strange, unpleasant feeling which was absolutely new

to him. . . . It seemed to him that he was in love with Anna Fyodorovna, the Shumihins' cousin, who was staying with them. She was a vivacious, loud-voiced, laughter-loving, healthy, and vigorous lady of thirty, with rosy cheeks, plump shoulders, a plump round chin and a continual smile on her thin lips. She was neither young nor beautiful—Volodya knew that perfectly well; but for some reason he could not help thinking of her, looking at her while she shrugged her plump shoulders and moved her flat back as she played croquet, or after prolonged laughter and running up and down stairs, sank into a low chair, and, half closing her eyes and gasping for breath, pretended that she was stifling and could not breathe. She was married. Her husband, a staid and dignified architect, came once a week to the villa, slept soundly, and returned to town. Volodya's strange feeling had begun with his conceiving an unaccountable hatred for the architect, and feeling relieved every time he went back to town.

Now, sitting in the arbour, thinking of his examination next day, and of his *maman,* at whom they laughed, he felt an intense desire to see Nyuta (that was what the Shumihins called Anna Fyodorovna), to hear her laughter and the rustle of her dress. . . . This desire was not like the pure, poetic love of which he read in novels and about which he dreamed every night when he went to bed; it was strange, incomprehensible; he was ashamed of it, and afraid of it as of something very wrong and impure, something which it was disagreeable to confess even to himself.

"It's not love," he said to himself. "One can't fall in love with women of thirty who are married. It is only a little intrigue. . . . Yes, an intrigue. . . ."

Pondering on the "intrigue," he thought of his uncontrollable shyness, his lack of moustache, his freckles, his narrow eyes, and put himself in his imagination side by side with Nyuta, and the juxtaposition seemed to him impossible; then he made haste to imagine himself bold, handsome, witty, dressed in the latest fashion.

When his dreams were at their height, as he sat huddled

together and looking at the ground in a dark corner of the arbour, he heard the sound of light footsteps. Some one was coming slowly along the avenue. Soon the steps stopped and something white gleamed in the entrance.

"Is there any one here?" asked a woman's voice.

Volodya recognized the voice, and raised his head in a fright.

"Who is here?" asked Nyuta, going into the arbour. "Ah, it is you, Volodya? What are you doing here? Thinking? And how can you go on thinking, thinking, thinking? . . . That's the way to go out of your mind!"

Volodya got up and looked in a dazed way at Nyuta. She had only just come back from bathing. Over her shoulder there was hanging a sheet and a rough towel, and from under the white silk kerchief on her head he could see the wet hair sticking to her forehead. There was the cool damp smell of the bath-house and of almond soap still hanging about her. She was out of breath from running quickly. The top button of her blouse was undone, so that the boy saw her throat and bosom.

"Why don't you say something?" said Nyuta, looking Volodya up and down. "It's not polite to be silent when a lady talks to you. What a clumsy seal you are though, Volodya! You always sit, saying nothing, thinking like some philosopher. There's not a spark of life or fire in you! You are really horrid! . . . At your age you ought to be living, skipping, and jumping, chattering, flirting, falling in love."

Volodya looked at the sheet that was held by a plump white hand, and thought. . . .

"He's mute," said Nyuta, with wonder; "it is strange, really. . . . Listen! Be a man! Come, you might smile at least! Phew, the horrid philosopher!" she laughed. "But do you know, Volodya, why you are such a clumsy seal? Because you don't devote yourself to the ladies. Why don't you? It's true there are no girls here, but there is nothing to prevent your flirting with the married ladies! Why don't you flirt with me, for instance?"

Volodya listened and scratched his forehead in acute and painful irresolution.

"It's only very proud people who are silent and love solitude," Nyuta went on, pulling his hand away from his forehead. "You are proud, Volodya. Why do you look at me like that from under your brows? Look me straight in the face, if you please! Yes, now then, clumsy seal!"

Volodya made up his mind to speak. Wanting to smile, he twitched his lower lip, blinked, and again put his hand to his forehead.

"I . . . I love you," he said.

Nyuta raised her eyebrows in surprise, and laughed.

"What do I hear?" she sang, as prima-donnas sing at the opera when they hear something awful. "What? What did you say? Say it again, say it again. . . ."

"I . . . I love you!" repeated Volodya.

And without his will's having any part in his action, without reflection or understanding, he took half a step towards Nyuta and clutched her by the arm. Everything was dark before his eyes, and tears came into them. The whole world was turned into one big, rough towel which smelt of the bath-house.

"Bravo, bravo!" he heard a merry laugh. "Why don't you speak? I want you to speak! Well?"

Seeing that he was not prevented from holding her arm, Volodya glanced at Nyuta's laughing face, and clumsily, awkwardly, put both arms round her waist, his hands meeting behind her back. He held her round the waist with both arms, while, putting her hands up to her head, showing the dimples in her elbows, she set her hair straight under the kerchief and said in a calm voice:

"You must be tactful, polite, charming, and you can only become that under feminine influence. But what a wicked, angry face you have! You must talk, laugh. . . . Yes, Volodya, don't be surly; you are young and will have plenty of time for philosophising. Come, let go of me; I am going. Let go."

Without effort she released her waist, and, humming some-

thing, walked out of the arbour. Volodya was left alone. He smoothed his hair, smiled, and walked three times to and fro across the arbour, then he sat down on the bench and smiled again. He felt insufferably ashamed, so much so that he wondered that human shame could reach such a pitch of acuteness and intensity. Shame made him smile, gesticulate, and whisper some disconnected words.

He was ashamed that he had been treated like a small boy, ashamed of his shyness, and, most of all, that he had had the audacity to put his arms round the waist of a respectable married woman, though, as it seemed to him, he had neither through age nor by external quality, nor by social position any right to do so.

He jumped up, went out of the arbour, and, without looking round, walked into the recesses of the garden furthest from the house.

"Ah! only to get away from here as soon as possible," he thought, clutching his head. "My God! as soon as possible."

The train by which Volodya was to go back with his *maman* was at eight-forty. There were three hours before the train started, but he would with pleasure have gone to the station at once without waiting for his *maman*.

At eight o'clock he went to the house. His whole figure was expressive of determination: what would be, would be! He made up his mind to go in boldly, to look them straight in the face, to speak in a loud voice, regardless of everything.

He crossed the terrace, the big hall and the drawing-room, and there stopped to take breath. He could hear them in the dining-room, drinking tea. Madame Shumihin, *maman,* and Nyuta were talking and laughing about something.

Volodya listened.

"I assure you!" said Nyuta. "I could not believe my eyes! When he began declaring his passion and—just imagine!—put his arms round my waist, I should not have recognised him. And you know he has a way with him! When he told me he was in love with me, there was something brutal in his face, like a Circassian."

"Really!" gasped *maman,* going off into a peal of laughter. "Really! How he does remind me of his father!"

Volodya ran back and dashed out into the open air.

"How could they talk of it aloud!" he wondered in agony, clasping his hands and looking up to the sky in horror. "They talk aloud in cold blood . . . and *maman* laughed! . . . *Maman!* My God, why didst Thou give me such a mother? Why?"

But he had to go to the house, come what might. He walked three times up and down the avenue, grew a little calmer, and went into the house.

"Why didn't you come in in time for tea?" Madame Shumihin asked sternly.

"I am sorry, it's . . . it's time for me to go," he muttered, not raising his eyes. "*Maman,* it's eight o'clock!"

"You go alone, my dear," said his *maman* languidly. "I am staying the night with Lili. Good-bye, my dear. . . . Let me make the sign of the cross over you."

She made the sign of the cross over her son, and said in French, turning to Nyuta:

"He's rather like Lermontov . . . isn't he?"

Saying good-bye after a fashion, without looking any one in the face, Volodya went out of the dining-room. Ten minutes later he was walking along the road to the station, and was glad of it. Now he felt neither frightened nor ashamed; he breathed freely and easily.

About half a mile from the station, he sat down on a stone by the side of the road, and gazed at the sun, which was half hidden behind a barrow. There were lights already here and there at the station, and one green light glimmered dimly, but the train was not yet in sight. It was pleasant to Volodya to sit still without moving, and to watch the evening coming little by little. The darkness of the arbour, the footsteps, the smell of the bath-house, the laughter, and the waist—all these rose with amazing vividness before his imagination, and all this was no longer so terrible and important as before.

"It's of no consequence. . . . She did not pull her hand

away, and laughed when I held her by the waist," he thought. "So she must have liked it. If she had disliked it she would have been angry. . . ."

And now Volodya felt sorry that he had not had more boldness there in the arbour. He felt sorry that he was so stupidly going away, and he was by now persuaded that if the same thing happened again he would be bolder and look at it more simply.

And it would not be difficult for the opportunity to occur again. They used to stroll about for a long time after supper at the Shumihins'. If Volodya went for a walk with Nyuta in the dark garden there would be an opportunity!

"I will go back," he thought, "and will go by the morning train to-morrow. . . . I will say I have missed the train."

And he turned back. . . . Madame Shumihin, *maman*, and one of the nieces were sitting on the verandah playing *vint*. When Volodya told them the lie that he had missed the train, they were uneasy that he might be late for the examination next day, and advised him to get up early. All the while they were playing he sat on one side, greedily watching Nyuta and waiting. . . . He already had a plan prepared in his mind: he would go up to Nyuta in the dark, would take her by the hand, then would embrace her; there would be no need to say anything, as both of them would understand without words.

But after supper the ladies did not go for a walk in the garden, but went on playing cards. They played till one o'clock at night, and then broke up to go to bed.

"How stupid it all is!" Volodya thought with vexation as he got into bed. "But never mind; I'll wait till to-morrow . . . to-morrow in the arbour. It doesn't matter. . . ."

He did not attempt to go to sleep, but sat in bed, hugging his knees and thinking. All thought of the examination was hateful to him. He had already made up his mind that they would expel him, and that there was nothing terrible about his being expelled. On the contrary, it was a good thing—a very good thing, in fact. Next day he would be as free as a

bird; he would put on ordinary clothes instead of his school uniform, would smoke openly, come out here, and make love to Nyuta when he liked; and he would not be a schoolboy but "a young man." And as for the rest of it, what is called a career, a future, that was clear; Volodya would go into the army or the telegraph service, or he would go into a chemist's shop and work his way up till he was a dispenser. . . . There were lots of callings. An hour or two passed, and he was still sitting and thinking. . . .

Towards three o'clock, when it was beginning to get light, the door creaked cautiously and his *maman* came into the room.

"Aren't you asleep?" she asked, yawning. "Go to sleep; I have only come in for a minute. . . . I am only fetching the drops. . . ."

"What for?"

"Poor Lili has got spasms again. Go to sleep, my child, your examination's to-morrow. . . ."

She took a bottle of something out of the cupboard, went to the window, read the label, and went away.

"Marya Leontyevna, those are not the drops!" Volodya heard a woman's voice, a minute later. "That's convallaria, and Lili wants morphine. Is your son asleep? Ask him to look for it. . . ."

It was Nyuta's voice. Volodya turned cold. He hurriedly put on his trousers, flung his coat over his shoulders, and went to the door.

"Do you understand? Morphine," Nyuta explained in a whisper. "There must be a label in Latin. Wake Volodya; he will find it."

Maman opened the door and Volodya caught sight of Nyuta. She was wearing the same loose wrapper in which she had gone to bathe. Her hair hung loose and disordered on her shoulders, her face looked sleepy and dark in the half-light. . . .

"Why, Volodya is not asleep," she said. "Volodya, look in the cupboard for the morphine, there's a dear! What a nuisance Lili is! She has always something the matter."

Maman muttered something, yawned, and went away.

"Look for it," said Nyuta. "Why are you standing still?"

Volodya went to the cupboard, knelt down, and began looking through the bottles and boxes of medicine. His hands were trembling, and he had a feeling in his chest and stomach as though cold waves were running all over his inside. He felt suffocated and giddy from the smell of ether, carbolic acid, and various drugs, which he quite unnecessarily snatched up with his trembling fingers and spilled in so doing.

"I believe *maman* has gone," he thought. "That's a good thing . . . a good thing. . . ."

"Will you be quick?" said Nyuta, drawling.

"In a minute. . . . Here, I believe this is morphine," said Volodya, reading on one of the labels the word "morph . . ." "Here it is!"

Nyuta was standing in the doorway in such a way that one foot was in his room and one was in the passage. She was tidying her hair, which was difficult to put in order because it was so thick and long, and looked absent-mindedly at Volodya. In her loose wrap, with her sleepy face and her hair down, in the dim light that came into the white sky not yet lit by the sun, she seemed to Volodya captivating, magnificent. . . . Fascinated, trembling all over, and remembering with relish how he had held that exquisite body in his arms in the arbour, he handed her the bottle and said:

"How wonderful you are!"

"What?"

She came into the room.

"What?" she asked, smiling.

He was silent and looked at her, just as in the arbour, he took her hand, and she looked at him with a smile and waited for what would happen next.

"I love you," he whispered.

She left off smiling, thought a minute, and said:

"Wait a little; I think somebody is coming. Oh, these schoolboys!" she said in an undertone, going to the door and

peeping out into the passage. "No, there is no one to be seen. . . ."

She came back.

Then it seemed to Volodya that the room, Nyuta, the sunrise and himself—all melted together in one sensation of acute, extraordinary, incredible bliss, for which one might give up one's whole life and face eternal torments. . . . But half a minute passed and all that vanished. Volodya saw only a fat, plain face, distorted by an expression of repulsion, and he himself suddenly felt a loathing for what had happened.

"I must go away, though," said Nyuta, looking at Volodya with disgust. "What a wretched, ugly . . . fie, ugly duckling!"

How unseemly her long hair, her loose wrap, her step, her voice seemed to Volodya now! . . .

"'Ugly duckling' . . ." he thought after she had gone away. "I really am ugly . . . everything is ugly."

The sun was rising, the birds were singing loudly; he could hear the gardener walking in the garden and the creaking of his wheelbarrow . . . and soon afterwards he heard the lowing of the cows and the sounds of the shepherd's pipe. The sunlight and the sounds told him that somewhere in this world there is a pure, refined, poetical life. But where was it? Volodya had never heard a word of it from his *maman* or any of the people round about him.

When the footman came to wake him for the morning train, he pretended to be asleep. . . .

"Bother it! Damn it all!" he thought.

He got up between ten and eleven.

Combing his hair before the looking-glass, and looking at his ugly face, pale from his sleepless night, he thought:

"It's perfectly true . . . an ugly duckling!"

When *maman* saw him and was horrified that he was not at his examination, Volodya said:

"I overslept myself, *maman*. . . . But don't worry, I will get a medical certificate."

Madame Shumihin and Nyuta waked up at one o'clock.

Volodya heard Madame Shumihin open her window with a bang, heard Nyuta go off into a peal of laughter in reply to her coarse voice. He saw the door open and a string of nieces and other toadies (among the latter was his *maman*) file into lunch, caught a glimpse of Nyuta's freshly washed laughing face, and, beside her, the black brows and beard of her husband the architect, who had just arrived.

Nyuta was wearing a Little Russian dress which did not suit her at all, and made her look clumsy; the architect was making dull and vulgar jokes. The rissoles served at lunch had too much onion in them—so it seemed to Volodya. It also seemed to him that Nyuta laughed loudly on purpose, and kept glancing in his direction to give him to understand that the memory of the night did not trouble her in the least, and that she was not aware of the presence at table of the "ugly duckling."

At four o'clock Volodya drove to the station with his *maman*. Foul memories, the sleepless night, the prospect of expulsion from school, the stings of conscience—all aroused in him now an oppressive, gloomy anger. He looked at *maman's* sharp profile, at her little nose, and at the raincoat which was a present from Nyuta, and muttered:

"Why do you powder? It's not becoming at your age! You make yourself up, don't pay your debts at cards, smoke other people's tobacco. . . . It's hateful! I don't love you . . . I don't love you!"

He was insulting her, and she moved her little eyes about in alarm, flung up her hands, and whispered in horror:

"What are you saying, my dear! Good gracious! the coachman will hear! Be quiet or the coachman will hear! He can overhear everything."

"I don't love you . . . I don't love you!" he went on breathlessly. "You've no soul and no morals. . . . Don't dare to wear that raincoat! Do you hear? Or else I will tear it into rags. . . ."

"Control yourself, my child," *maman* wept; "the coachman can hear!"

"And where is my father's fortune? Where is your money? You have wasted it all. I am not ashamed of being poor, but I ashamed of having such a mother. . . . When my schoolfellows ask questions about you, I always blush."

In the train they had to pass two stations before they reached the town. Volodya spent all the time on the little platform between two carriages and shivered all over. He did not want to go into the compartment because there the mother he hated was sitting. He hated himself, hated the ticket collectors, the smoke from the engine, the cold to which he attributed his shivering. And the heavier the weight on his heart, the more strongly he felt that somewhere in the world, among some people, there was a pure, honourable, warm, refined life, full of love, affection, gaiety and serenity. . . . He felt this and was so intensely miserable that one of the passengers, after looking in his face attentively, actually asked:

"You have the toothache, I suppose?"

In the town *maman* and Volodya lived with Marya Petrovna, a lady of noble rank, who had a large flat and let rooms to boarders. *Maman* had two rooms, one with windows and two pictures in gold frames hanging on the walls, in which her bed stood and in which she lived, and a little dark room opening out of it in which Volodya lived. Here there was a sofa on which he slept, and, except that sofa, there was no other furniture; the rest of the room was entirely filled up with wicker baskets full of clothes, cardboard hat-boxes, and all sorts of rubbish, which *maman* preserved for some reason or other. Volodya prepared his lessons either in his mother's room or in the "general room," as the large room in which the boarders assembled at dinner-time and in the evening was called.

On reaching home he lay down on his sofa and put the quilt over him to stop his shivering. The cardboard hat-boxes, the wicker baskets, and the other rubbish, reminded him that he had not a room of his own, that he had no refuge in which he could get away from his mother, from her visitors, and from the voices that were floating up from the "general room."

The satchel and the books lying about in the corner reminded him of the examination he had missed. . . . For some reason there came into his mind, quite inappropriately, Mentone, where he had lived with his father when he was seven years old; he thought of Biarritz and two little English girls with whom he ran about on the sand. . . . He tried to recall to his memory the colour of the sky, the sea, the height of the waves, and his mood at the time, but he could not succeed. The English girls flitted before his imagination as though they were living; all the rest was a medley of images that floated away in confusion. . . .

"No; it's cold here," thought Volodya. He got up, put on his overcoat, and went into the "general room."

There they were drinking tea. There were three people at the samovar: *maman;* an old lady with tortoiseshell pince-nez, who gave music lessons; and Avgustin Mihalitch, an elderly and very stout Frenchman, who was employed at a perfumery factory.

"I have had no dinner to-day," said *maman.* "I ought to send the maid to buy some bread."

"Dunyasha!" shouted the Frenchman.

It appeared that the maid had been sent out somewhere by the lady of the house.

"Oh, that's of no consequence," said the Frenchman, with a broad smile. "I will go for some bread myself at once. Oh, it's nothing."

He laid his strong, pungent cigar in a conspicuous place, put on his hat and went out. After he had gone away *maman* began telling the music teacher how she had been staying at the Shumihins', and how warmly they welcomed her.

"Lili Shumihin is a relation of mine, you know," she said. "Her late husband, General Shumihin, was a cousin of my husband. And she was a Baroness Kolb by birth. . . ."

"Maman, that's false!" said Volodya irritably. "Why tell lies?"

He knew perfectly well that what his mother said was true; in what she was saying about General Shumihin and about

Baroness Kolb there was not a word of lying, but nevertheless he felt that she was lying. There was a suggestion of falsehood in her manner of speaking, in the expression of her face, in her eyes, in everything.

"You are lying," repeated Volodya; and he brought his fist down on the table with such force that all the crockery shook and *maman's* tea was spilt over. "Why do you talk about generals and baronesses? It's all lies!"

The music teacher was disconcerted, and coughed into her handkerchief, affecting to sneeze, and *maman* began to cry.

"Where can I go?" thought Volodya.

He had been in the street already; he was ashamed to go to his schoolfellows. Again, quite incongruously, he remembered the two little English girls. . . . He paced up and down the "general room," and went into Avgustin Mihalitch's room. Here there was a strong smell of ethereal oils and glycerine soap. On the table, in the window, and even on the chairs, there were a number of bottles, glasses, and wineglasses containing fluids of various colours. Volodya took up from the table a newspaper, opened it and read the title *Figaro*. . . . There was a strong and pleasant scent about the paper. Then he took a revolver from the table. . . .

"There, there! Don't take any notice of it." The music teacher was comforting *maman* in the next room. "He is young! Young people of his age never restrain themselves. One must resign oneself to that."

"No, Yevgenya Andreyevna; he's too spoilt," said *maman* in a singsong voice. "He has no one in authority over him, and I am weak and can do nothing. Oh, I am unhappy!"

Volodya put the muzzle of the revolver to his mouth, felt something like a trigger or spring, and pressed it with his finger. . . . Then felt something else projecting, and once more pressed it. Taking the muzzle out of his mouth, he wiped it with the lapel of his coat, looked at the lock. He had never in his life taken a weapon in his hand before. . . .

"I believe one ought to raise this . . ." he reflected. "Yes, it seems so."

Avgustin Mihalitch went into the "general room," and with a laugh began telling them about something. Volodya put the muzzle in his mouth again, pressed it with his teeth, and pressed something with his fingers. There was a sound of a shot. . . . Something hit Volodya in the back of his head with terrible violence, and he fell on the table with his face downwards among the bottles and glasses. Then he saw his father, as in Mentone, in a top-hat with a wide black band on it, wearing mourning for some lady, suddenly seize him by both hands, and they fell headlong into a very deep, dark pit.

Then everything was blurred and vanished.

AFTER THE THEATRE

NADYA ZELENIN had just come back with her mamma from the theatre where she had seen a performance of "Yevgeny Onyegin." As soon as she reached her own room she threw off her dress, let down her hair, and in her petticoat and white dressing-jacket hastily sat down to the table to write a letter like Tatyana's.

"I love you," she wrote, "but you do not love me, do not love me!"

She wrote it and laughed.

She was only sixteen and did not yet love anyone. She knew that an officer called Gorny and a student called Gruzdev loved her, but now after the opera she wanted to be doubtful of their love. To be unloved and unhappy—how interesting that was. There is something beautiful, touching, and poetical about it when one loves and the other is indifferent. Onyegin was interesting because he was not in love at all, and Tatyana was fascinating because she was so much in love; but if they had been equally in love with each other and had been happy, they would perhaps have seemed dull.

"Leave off declaring that you love me," Nadya went on writing, thinking of Gorny. "I cannot believe it. You are very clever, cultivated, serious, you have immense talent, and perhaps a brilliant future awaits you, while I am an uninteresting girl of no importance, and you know very well that I should be only a hindrance in your life. It is true that you were attracted by me and thought you had found your ideal in me, but that was a mistake, and now you are asking yourself in despair: 'Why did I meet that girl?' And only your goodness of heart prevents you from owning it to yourself. . . ."

Nadya felt sorry for herself, she began to cry, and went on:

"It is hard for me to leave my mother and my brother, or I should take a nun's veil and go whither chance may lead me. And you would be left free and would love another. Oh, if I were dead!"

She could not make out what she had written through her tears; little rainbows were quivering on the table, on the floor, on the ceiling, as though she were looking through a prism. She could not write, she sank back in her easy-chair and fell to thinking of Gorny.

My God! how interesting, how fascinating men were! Nadya recalled the fine expression, ingratiating, guilty, and soft, which came into the officer's face when one argued about music with him, and the effort he made to prevent his voice from betraying his passion. In a society where cold haughtiness and indifference are regarded as signs of good breeding and gentlemanly bearing, one must conceal one's passions. And he did try to conceal them, but he did not succeed, and everyone knew very well that he had a passionate love of music. The endless discussions about music and the bold criticisms of people who knew nothing about it kept him always on the strain; he was frightened, timid, and silent. He played the piano magnificently, like a professional pianist, and if he had not been in the army he would certainly have been a famous musician.

The tears on her eyes dried. Nadya remembered that Gorny had declared his love at a Symphony concert, and again downstairs by the hatstand where there was a tremendous draught blowing in all directions.

"I am very glad that you have at last made the acquaintance of Gruzdev, our student friend," she went on writing. "He is a very clever man, and you will be sure to like him. He came to see us yesterday and stayed till two o'clock. We were all delighted with him, and I regretted that you had not come. He said a great deal that was remarkable."

Nadya laid her arms on the table and leaned her head on them, and her hair covered the letter. She recalled that the student, too, loved her, and that he had as much right to a

letter from her as Gorny. Wouldn't it be better after all to write to Gruzdev? There was a stir of joy in her bosom for no reason whatever; at first the joy was small, and rolled in her bosom like an india-rubber ball; then it became more massive, bigger, and rushed like a wave. Nadya forgot Gorny and Gruzdev; her thoughts were in a tangle and her joy grew and grew; from her bosom it passed into her arms and legs, and it seemed as though a light, cool breeze were breathing on her head and ruffling her hair. Her shoulders quivered with subdued laughter, the table and the lamp chimney shook, too, and tears from her eyes splashed on the letter. She could not stop laughing, and to prove to herself that she was not laughing about nothing she made haste to think of something funny.

"What a funny poodle," she said, feeling as though she would choke with laughter. "What a funny poodle!"

She thought how, after tea the evening before, Gruzdev had played with Maxim the poodle, and afterwards had told them about a very intelligent poodle who had run after a crow in the yard, and the crow had looked round at him and said: "Oh, you scamp!"

The poodle, not knowing he had to do with a learned crow, was fearfully confused and retreated in perplexity, then began barking. . . .

"No, I had better love Gruzdev," Nadya decided, and she tore up the letter to Gorny.

She fell to thinking of the student, of his love, of her love; but the thoughts in her head insisted on flowing in all directions, and she thought about everything—about her mother, about the street, about the pencil, about the piano. . . . She thought of them joyfully, and felt that everything was good, splendid, and her joy told her that this was not all, that in a little while it would be better still. Soon it would be spring, summer, going with her mother to Gorbiki. Gorny would come for his furlough, would walk about the garden with her and make love to her. Gruzdev would come too. He would play croquet and skittles with her, and would tell

her wonderful things. She had a passionate longing for the garden, the darkness, the pure sky, the stars. Again her shoulders shook with laughter, and it seemed to her that there was a scent of wormwood in the room and that a twig was tapping at the window.

She went to her bed, sat down, and not knowing what to do with the immense joy which filled her with yearning, she looked at the holy image hanging at the back of her bed, and said:

"Oh, Lord God! Oh, Lord God!"

THE TROUSSEAU

I HAVE seen a great many houses in my time, little and big, new and old, built of stone and of wood, but of one house I have kept a very vivid memory. It was, properly speaking, rather a cottage than a house—a tiny cottage of one story, with three windows, looking extraordinarily like a little old hunchback woman with a cap on. Its white stucco walls, its tiled roof, and dilapidated chimney, were all drowned in a perfect sea of green. The cottage was lost to sight among the mulberry-trees, acacias, and poplars planted by the grandfathers and great-grandfathers of its present occupants. And yet it is a town house. Its wide courtyard stands in a row with other similar green courtyards, and forms part of a street. Nothing ever drives down that street, and very few persons are ever seen walking through it.

The shutters of the little house are always closed; its occupants do not care for sunlight—the light is no use to them. The windows are never opened, for they are not fond of fresh air. People who spend their lives in the midst of acacias, mulberries, and nettles have no passion for nature. It is only to the summer visitor that God has vouchsafed an eye for the beauties of nature. The rest of mankind remain steeped in profound ignorance of the existence of such beauties. People never prize what they have always had in abundance. "What we have, we do not treasure," and what's more we do not even love it.

The little house stands in an earthly paradise of green trees with happy birds nesting in them. But inside . . . alas! . . . In summer, it is close and stifling within; in winter, hot as a Turkish bath, not one breath of air, and the dreariness! . . .

The first time I visited the little house was many years ago on business. I brought a message from the Colonel who was the owner of the house to his wife and daughter. That first visit I remember very distinctly. It would be impossible, indeed, to forget it.

Imagine a limp little woman of forty, gazing at you with alarm and astonishment while you walk from the passage into the parlour. You are a stranger, a visitor, "a young man"; that's enough to reduce her to a state of terror and bewilderment. Though you have no dagger, axe or revolver in your hand, and though you smile affably, you are met with alarm.

"Whom have I the honour and pleasure of addressing?" the little lady asks in a trembling voice.

I introduced myself and explained why I had come.

The alarm and amazement were at once succeeded by a shrill, joyful "Ach!" and she turned her eyes upwards to the ceiling. This "Ach!" was caught up like an echo and repeated from the hall to the parlour, from the parlour to the kitchen, and so on down to the cellar. Soon the whole house was resounding with "Ach!" in various voices.

Five minutes later I was sitting on a big, soft, warm lounge in the drawing-room listening to the "Ach!" echoing all down the street. There was a smell of moth powder, and of goat-skin shoes, a pair of which lay on a chair beside me wrapped in a handkerchief. In the windows were geraniums, and muslin curtains, and on the curtains were torpid flies. On the wall hung the portrait of some bishop, painted in oils, with the glass broken at one corner, and next to the bishop a row of ancestors with lemon-coloured faces of a gipsy type. On the table lay a thimble, a reel of cotton, and a half-knitted stocking, and paper patterns and a black blouse, tacked together, were lying on the floor. In the next room two alarmed and fluttered old women were hurriedly picking up similar patterns and pieces of tailor's chalk from the floor.

"You must, please, excuse us; we are dreadfully untidy," said the little lady.

While she talked to me, she stole embarrassed glances to-

wards the other room where the patterns were still being picked up. The door, too, seemed embarrassed, opening an inch or two and then shutting again.

"What's the matter?" said the little lady, addressing the door.

"Où est mon cravatte lequel mon père m'avait envoyé de Koursk? asked a female voice at the door.

"Ah, est-ce que, Marie . . . que . . . Really, it's impossible. . . . *Nous avons donc chez nous un homme peu connu de nous.* Ask Lukerya."

"How well we speak French, though!" I read in the eyes of the little lady, who was flushing with pleasure.

Soon afterwards the door opened and I saw a tall, thin girl of nineteen, in a long muslin dress with a gilt belt from which, I remember, hung a mother-of-pearl fan. She came in, dropped a curtsy, and flushed crimson. Her long nose, which was slightly pitted with smallpox, turned red first, and then the flush passed up to her eyes and her forehead.

"My daughter," chanted the little lady, "and, Manetchka, this is a young gentleman who has come," etc.

I was introduced, and expressed my surprise at the number of paper patterns. Mother and daughter dropped their eyes.

"We had a fair here at Ascension," said the mother; "we always buy materials at the fair, and then it keeps us busy with sewing till the next year's fair comes around again. We never put things out to be made. My husband's pay is not very ample, and we are not able to permit ourselves luxuries. So we have to make up everything ourselves."

"But who will ever wear such a number of things? There are only two of you?"

"Oh . . . as though we were thinking of wearing them! They are not to be worn; they are for the trousseau!"

"Ah, *maman,* what are you saying?" said the daughter, and she crimsoned again. "Our visitor might suppose it was true. I don't intend to be married. Never!"

She said this, but at the very word "married" her eyes glowed.

Tea, biscuits, butter, and jam were brought in, followed by raspberries and cream. At seven o'clock, we had supper, consisting of six courses, and while we were at supper I heard a loud yawn from the next room. I looked with surprise towards the door: it was a yawn that could only come from a man.

"That's my husband's brother, Yegor Semyonitch," the little lady explained, noticing my surprise. "He's been living with us for the last year. Please excuse him; he cannot come in to see you. He is such an unsociable person, he is shy with strangers. He is going into a monastery. He was unfairly treated in the service, and the disappointment has preyed on his mind."

After supper the little lady showed the vestment which Yegor Semyonitch was embroidering with his own hands as an offering for the Church. Manetchka threw off her shyness for a moment and showed me the tobacco-pouch she was embroidering for her father. When I pretended to be greatly struck by her work, she flushed crimson and whispered something in her mother's ear. The latter beamed all over, and invited me to go with her to the store-room. There I was shown five large trunks, and a number of smaller trunks and boxes.

"This is her trousseau," her mother whispered; "we made it all ourselves."

After looking at these forbidding trunks I took leave of my hospitable hostesses. They made me promise to come and see them again some day.

It happened that I was able to keep this promise. Seven years after my first visit, I was sent down to the little town to give expert evidence in a case that was being tried there.

As I entered the little house I heard the same "Ach!" echo through it. They recognized me at once. . . . Well they might! My first visit had been an event in their lives, and when events are few they are long remembered.

I walked into the drawing-room: the mother, who had grown stouter and was already getting grey, was creeping

about on the floor, cutting out some blue material. The daughter was sitting on the sofa, embroidering.

There was the same smell of moth powder; there were the same patterns, the same portrait with the broken glass. But yet there was a change. Beside the portrait of the bishop hung a portrait of the Colonel, and the ladies were in mourning. The Colonel's death had occurred a week after his promotion to be a general.

Reminiscences began. . . . The widow shed tears.

"We have had a terrible loss," she said. "My husband, you know, is dead. We are alone in the world now, and have no one but ourselves to look to. Yegor Semyonitch is alive, but I have no good news to tell of him. They would not have him in the monastery on account of—of intoxicating beverages. And now in his disappointment he drinks more than ever. I am thinking of going to the Marshal of Nobility to lodge a complaint. Would you believe it, he has more than once broken open the trunks and . . . taken Manetchka's trousseau and given it to beggars. He has taken everything out of two of the trunks! If he goes on like this, my Manetchka will be left without a trousseau at all."

"What are you saying, *maman?*" said Manetchka, embarrassed. "Our visitor might suppose . . . there's no knowing what he might suppose. . . . I shall never—never marry."

Manetchka cast her eyes up to the ceiling with a look of hope and aspiration, evidently not for a moment believing what she said.

A little bald-headed masculine figure in a brown coat and goloshes instead of boots darted like a mouse across the passage and disappeared. "Yegor Semyonitch, I suppose," I thought.

I looked at the mother and daughter together. They both looked much older and terribly changed. The mother's hair was silvered, but the daughter was so faded and withered that her mother might have been taken for her elder sister, not more than five years her senior.

"I have made up my mind to go to the Marshal," the mother said to me, forgetting she had told me this already.

"I mean to make a complaint. Yegor Semyonitch lays his hands on everything we make, and offers it up for the sake of his soul. My Manetchka is left without a trousseau."

Manetchka flushed again, but this time she said nothing.

"We have to make them all over again. And God knows we are not so well off. We are all alone in the world now."

"We are alone in the world," repeated Manetchka.

A year ago fate brought me once more to the little house.

Walking into the drawing-room, I saw the old lady. Dressed all in black with heavy crape *pleureuses,* she was sitting on the sofa sewing. Beside her sat the little old man in the brown coat and the goloshes instead of boots. On seeing me, he jumped up and ran out of the room.

In response to greeting, the old lady smiled and said:

"*Je suis charmée de vous revoir, monsieur.*"

"What are you making?" I asked, a little later.

"It's a blouse. When it's finished I shall take it to the priest's to be put away, or else Yegor Semyonitch would carry it off. I store everything at the priest's now," she added in a whisper.

And looking at the portrait of her daughter which stood before her on the table, she sighed and said:

"We are all alone in the world."

And where was the daughter? Where was Manetchka? I did not ask. I did not dare to ask the old mother dressed in her new deep mourning. And while I was in the room, and when I got up to go, no Manetchka came out to greet me. I did not hear her voice, nor her soft, timid footstep. . . .

I understood, and my heart was heavy.

THE HUNTSMAN

A SULTRY, stifling midday. Not a cloudlet in the sky. . . . The sun-baked grass had a disconsolate, hopeless look: even if there were rain it could never be green again. . . . The forest stood silent, motionless, as though it were looking at something with its tree-tops or expecting something.

At the edge of the clearing a tall, narrow-shouldered man of forty in a red shirt, in patched trousers that had been a gentleman's, and in high boots, was slouching along with a lazy, shambling step. He was sauntering along the road. On the right was the green of the clearing, on the left a golden sea of ripe rye stretched to the very horizon. He was red and perspiring, a white cap with a straight jockey peak, evidently a gift from some open-handed young gentleman, perched jauntily on his handsome flaxen head. Across his shoulder hung a game-bag with a blackcock lying in it. The man held a double-barrelled gun cocked in his hand, and screwed up his eyes in the direction of his lean old dog who was running on ahead sniffing the bushes. There was stillness all round, not a sound . . . everything living was hiding away from the heat.

"Yegor Vlassitch!" the huntsman suddenly heard a soft voice.

He started and, looking round, scowled. Beside him, as though she had sprung out of the earth, stood a pale-faced woman of thirty with a sickle in her hand. She was trying to look into his face, and was smiling diffidently.

"Oh, it is you, Pelagea!" said the huntsman, stopping and deliberately uncocking the gun. "H'm! . . . How have you come here?"

"The women from our village are working here, so I have come with them. . . . As a labourer, Yegor Vlassitch."

"Oh . . ." growled Yegor Vlassitch, and slowly walked on.

Pelagea followed him. They walked in silence for twenty paces.

"I have not seen you for a long time, Yegor Vlassitch . . ." said Pelagea, looking tenderly at the huntsman's moving shoulders. "I have not seen you since you came into our hut at Easter for a drink of water . . . you came in at Easter for a minute and then God knows how . . . drunk . . . you scolded and beat me and went away . . . I have been waiting and waiting . . . I've tired my eyes out looking for you. Ah, Yegor Vlassitch, Yegor Vlassitch! you might look in just once!"

"What is there for me to do there?"

"Of course there is nothing for you to do . . . though to be sure . . . there is the place to look after. . . . To see how things are going. . . . You are the master. . . . I say, you have shot a blackcock, Yegor Vlassitch! You ought to sit down and rest!"

As she said all this Pelagea laughed like a silly girl and looked up at Yegor's face. Her face was simply radiant with happiness.

"Sit down? If you like . . ." said Yegor in a tone of indifference, and he chose a spot between two fir-trees. "Why are you standing? You sit down too."

Pelagea sat a little way off in the sun and, ashamed of her joy, put her hand over her smiling mouth. Two minutes passed in silence.

"You might come for once," said Pelagea.

"What for?" sighed Yegor, taking off his cap and wiping his red forehead with his hand. "There is no object in my coming. To go for an hour or two is only waste of time, it's simply upsetting you, and to live continually in the village my soul could not endure. . . . You know yourself I am a pampered man. . . . I want a bed to sleep in, good tea to drink, and refined conversation. . . . I want all the niceties, while you live in poverty and dirt in the village. . . . I couldn't

stand it for a day. Suppose there were an edict that I must live with you, I should either set fire to the hut or lay hands on myself. From a boy I've had this love for ease; there is no help for it."

"Where are you living now?"

"With the gentleman here, Dmitry Ivanitch, as a huntsman. I furnish his table with game, but he keeps me . . . more for his pleasure than anything."

"That's not proper work you're doing, Yegor Vlassitch. . . . For other people it's a pastime, but with you it's like a trade . . . like real work."

"You don't understand, you silly," said Yegor, gazing gloomily at the sky. "You have never understood, and as long as you live you will never understand what sort of man I am. . . . You think of me as a foolish man, gone to the bad, but to anyone who understands I am the best shot there is in the whole district. The gentry feel that, and they have even printed things about me in a magazine. There isn't a man to be compared with me as a sportsman. . . . And it is not because I am pampered and proud that I look down upon your village work. From my childhood, you know, I have never had any calling apart from guns and dogs. If they took away my gun, I used to go out with the fishing hook, if they took the hook I caught things with my hands. And I went in for horse-dealing too, I used to go to the fairs when I had the money, and you know that if a peasant goes in for being a sportsman, or a horse-dealer, it's good-bye to the plough. Once the spirit of freedom has taken a man you will never root it out of him. In the same way, if a gentleman goes in for being an actor or for any other art, he will never make an official or a landowner. You are a woman, and you do not understand, but one must understand that."

"I understand, Yegor Vlassitch."

"You don't understand if you are going to cry. . . ."

"I . . . I'm not crying," said Pelagea, turning away. "It's a sin, Yegor Vlassitch! You might stay a day with luckless me, anyway. It's twelve years since I was married to you,

and . . . and . . . there has never once been love between us! . . . I . . . I am not crying."

"Love . . ." muttered Yegor, scratching his hand. "There can't be any love. It's only in name we are husband and wife; we aren't really. In your eyes I am a wild man, and in mine you are a simple peasant woman with no understanding. Are we well matched? I am a free, pampered, profligate man, while you are a working woman, going in bark shoes and never straightening your back. The way I think of myself is that I am the foremost man in every kind of sport, and you look at me with pity. . . . Is that being well matched?"

"But we are married, you know, Yegor Vlassitch," sobbed Pelagea.

"Not married of our free will. . . . Have you forgotten? You have to thank Count Sergey Pavlovitch and yourself. Out of envy, because I shot better than he did, the Count kept giving me wine for a whole month, and when a man's drunk you could make him change his religion, let alone getting married. To pay me out he married me to you when I was drunk. . . . A huntsman to a herd-girl! You saw I was drunk, why did you marry me? You were not a serf, you know; you could have resisted. Of course it was a bit of luck for a herd-girl to marry a huntsman, but you ought to have thought about it. Well, now be miserable, cry. It's a joke for the Count, but a crying matter for you. . . . Beat yourself against the wall."

A silence followed. Three wild ducks flew over the clearing. Yegor followed them with his eyes till, transformed into three scarcely visible dots, they sank down far beyond the forest.

"How do you live?" he asked, moving his eyes from the ducks to Pelagea.

"Now I am going out to work, and in the winter I take a child from the Foundling Hospital and bring it up on the bottle. They give me a rouble and a half a month."

"Oh. . . ."

Again a silence. From the strip that had been reaped floated

a soft song which broke off at the very beginning. It was too hot to sing.

"They say you have put up a new hut for Akulina," said Pelagea.

Yegor did not speak.

"So she is dear to you. . . ."

"It's your luck, it's fate!" said the huntsman, stretching. "You must put up with it, poor thing. But good-bye, I've been chattering long enough. . . . I must be at Boltovo by the evening."

Yegor rose, stretched himself, and slung his gun over his shoulder; Pelagea got up.

"And when are you coming to the village?" she asked softly.

"I have no reason to, I shall never come sober, and you have little to gain from me drunk; I am spiteful when I am drunk. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, Yegor Vlassitch."

Yegor put his cap on the back of his head and, clicking to his dog, went on his way. Pelagea stood still looking after him. . . . She saw his moving shoulder-blades, his jaunty cap, his lazy, careless step, and her eyes were full of sadness and tender affection. . . . Her gaze flitted over her husband's tall, lean figure and caressed and fondled it. . . . He, as though he felt that gaze, stopped and looked round. . . . He did not speak, but from his face, from his shrugged shoulders, Pelagea could see that he wanted to say something to her. She went up to him timidly and looked at him with imploring eyes.

"Take it," he said, turning round.

He gave her a crumpled rouble note and walked quickly away.

"Good-bye, Yegor Vlassitch," she said, mechanically taking the rouble.

He walked by a long road, straight as a taut strap. She, pale and motionless as a statue, stood, her eyes seizing every step he took. But the red of his shirt melted into the dark

colour of his trousers, his step could not be seen, and the dog could not be distinguished from the boots. Nothing could be seen but the cap, and . . . suddenly Yegor turned off sharply into the clearing and the cap vanished in the greenness.

"Good-bye, Yegor Vlassitch," whispered Pelagea, and she stood on tiptoe to see the white cap once more.

TALENT

An artist called Yegor Savvitch, who was spending his summer holidays at the house of an officer's widow, was sitting on his bed, given up to the depression of morning. It was beginning to look like autumn out of doors. Heavy, clumsy clouds covered the sky in thick layers; there was a cold, piercing wind, and with a plaintive wail the trees were all bending on one side. He could see the yellow leaves whirling round in the air and on the earth. Farewell, summer! This melancholy of nature is beautiful and poetical in its own way, when it is looked at with the eyes of an artist, but Yegor Savvitch was in no humour to see beauty. He was devoured by ennui and his only consolation was the thought that by to-morrow he would not be there. The bed, the chairs, the tables, the floor, were all heaped up with cushions, crumpled bed-clothes, boxes. The floor had not been swept, the cotton curtains had been taken down from the windows. Next day he was moving to town.

His landlady, the widow, was out. She had gone off somewhere to hire horses and carts to move next day to town. Profiting by the absence of her severe mamma, her daughter Katya, aged twenty, had for a long time been sitting in the young man's room. Next day the painter was going away, and she had a great deal to say to him. She kept talking, talking, and yet she felt that she had not said a tenth of what she wanted to say. With her eyes full of tears, she gazed at his shaggy head, gazed at it with rapture and sadness. And Yegor Savvitch was shaggy to a hideous extent, so that he

looked like a wild animal. His hair hung down to his shoulder-blades, his beard grew from his neck, from his nostrils, from his ears; his eyes were lost under his thick overhanging brows. It was all so thick, so matted, that if a fly or a beetle had been caught in his hair, it would never have found its way out of this enchanted thicket. Yegor Savvitch listened to Katya, yawning. He was tired. When Katya began whimpering, he looked severely at her from his overhanging eyebrows, frowned, and said in a heavy, deep bass:

"I cannot marry."

"Why not?" Katya asked softly.

"Because for a painter, and in fact any man who lives for art, marriage is out of the question. An artist must be free."

"But in what way should I hinder you, Yegor Savvitch?"

"I am not speaking of myself, I am speaking in general. . . . Famous authors and painters have never married."

"And you, too, will be famous—I understand that perfectly. But put yourself in my place. I am afraid of my mother. She is stern and irritable. When she knows that you won't marry me, and that it's all nothing . . . she'll begin to give it to me. Oh, how wretched I am! And you haven't paid for your rooms, either! . . ."

"Damn her! I'll pay."

Yegor Savvitch got up and began walking to and fro.

"I ought to be abroad!" he said. And the artist told her that nothing was easier than to go abroad. One need do nothing but paint a picture and sell it.

"Of course!" Katya assented. "Why haven't you painted one in the summer?"

"Do you suppose I can work in a barn like this?" the artist said ill-humouredly. "And where should I get models?"

Some one banged the door viciously in the storey below. Katya, who was expecting her mother's return from minute to minute, jumped up and ran away. The artist was left alone. For a long time he walked to and fro, threading his way between the chairs and the piles of untidy objects of all sorts. He heard the widow rattling the crockery and loudly

abusing the peasants who had asked her two roubles for each cart. In his disgust Yegor Savvitch stopped before the cupboard and stared for a long while, frowning at the decanter of vodka.

"Ah, blast you!" he heard the widow railing at Katya. "Damnation take you!"

The artist drank a glass of vodka, and the dark cloud in his soul gradually disappeared, and he felt as though all his inside was smiling within him. He began dreaming. . . . His fancy pictured how he would become great. He could not imagine his future works but he could see distinctly how the papers would talk of him, how the shops would sell his photographs, with what envy his friends would look after him. He tried to picture himself in a magnificent drawing-room surrounded by pretty and adoring women; but the picture was misty, vague, as he had never in his life seen a drawing-room. The pretty and adoring women were not a success either, for, except Katya, he knew no adoring woman, not even one respectable girl. People who know nothing about life usually picture life from books, but Yegor Savvitch knew no books either. He had tried to read Gogol, but had fallen asleep on the second page.

"It won't burn, drat the thing!" the widow bawled down below, as she set the samovar. "Katya, give me some charcoal!"

The dreamy artist felt a longing to share his hopes and dreams with some one. He went downstairs into the kitchen, where the stout widow and Katya were busy about a dirty stove in the midst of charcoal fumes from the samovar. There he sat down on a bench close to a big pot and began:

"It's a fine thing to be an artist! I can go just where I like, do what I like. One has not to work in an office or in the fields. I've no superiors or officers over me. . . . I'm my own superior. And with all that I'm doing good to humanity!"

And after dinner he composed himself for a "rest." He usually slept till the twilight of evening. But this time soon

after dinner he felt that some one was pulling at his leg. Some one kept laughing and shouting his name. He opened his eyes and saw his friend Ukleikin, the landscape painter, who had been away all the summer in the Kostroma district.

"Bah!" he cried, delighted. "What do I see?"

There followed handshakes, questions.

"Well, have you brought anything? I suppose you've knocked off hundreds of sketches?" said Yegor Savvitch, watching Ukleikin taking his belongings out of his trunk.

"H'm! . . . Yes. I have done something. And how are you getting on? Have you been painting anything?"

Yegor Savvitch dived behind the bed, and crimson in the face, extracted a canvas in a frame covered with dust and spider webs.

"See here. . . . A girl at the window after parting from her betrothed. In three sittings. Not nearly finished yet."

The picture represented Katya faintly outlined sitting at an open window, from which could be seen a garden and lilac distance. Ukleikin did not like the picture.

"H'm! . . . There is air and . . . and there is expression," he said. "There's a feeling of distance, but . . . but that bush is screaming . . . screaming horribly!"

The decanter was brought on to the scene.

Towards evening Kostyliov, also a promising beginner, an historical painter, came in to see Yegor Savvitch. He was a friend staying at the next villa, and was a man of five-and-thirty. He had long hair, and wore a blouse with a Shakespeare collar, and had a dignified manner. Seeing the vodka, he frowned, complained of his chest, but yielding to his friends' entreaties, drank a glass.

"I've thought of a subject, my friends," he began, getting drunk. "I want to paint some new . . . Herod or Clepentian, or some blackguard of that description, you understand, and to contrast with him the idea of Christianity. On the one side Rome, you understand, and on the other Christianity. . . . I want to represent the spirit, you understand? The spirit!"

And the widow downstairs shouted continually:

"Katya, give me the cucumbers! Go to Sidorov's and get some kvass, you jade!"

Like wolves in a cage, the three friends kept pacing to and fro from one end of the room to the other. They talked without ceasing, talked, hotly and genuinely; all three were excited, carried away. To listen to them it would seem they had the future, fame, money, in their hands. And it never occurred to either of them that time was passing, that every day life was nearing its close, that they had lived at other people's expense a great deal and nothing yet was accomplished; that they were all bound by the inexorable law by which of a hundred promising beginners only two or three rise to any position and all the others draw blanks in the lottery, perish playing the part of flesh for the cannon. . . . They were gay and happy, and looked the future boldly in the face!

At one o'clock in the morning Kostyliov said good-bye, and smoothing out his Shakespeare collar, went home. The landscape painter remained to sleep at Yegor Savvitch's. Before going to bed, Yegor Savvitch took a candle and made his way into the kitchen to get a drink of water. In the dark, narrow passage Katya was sitting, on a box, and, with her hands clasped on her knees, was looking upwards. A blissful smile was straying on her pale, exhausted face, and her eyes were beaming.

"Is that you? What are you thinking about?" Yegor Savvitch asked her.

"I am thinking of how you'll be famous," she said in a half-whisper. "I keep fancying how you'll become a famous man. . . . I overheard all your talk. . . . I keep dreaming and dreaming. . . ."

Katya went off into a happy laugh, cried, and laid her hands reverently on her idol's shoulders.

HUSH!

Ivan Yegoritch Krasnyhin, a fourth-rate journalist, returns home late at night, grave and careworn, with a peculiar air of concentration. He looks like a man expecting a police-raid or contemplating suicide. Pacing about his rooms he halts abruptly, ruffles up his hair, and says in the tone in which Laertes announces his intention of avenging his sister:

"Shattered, soul-weary, a sick load of misery on the heart . . . and then to sit down and write. And this is called life! How is it nobody has described the agonizing discord in the soul of a writer who has to amuse the crowd when his heart is heavy or to shed tears at the word of command when his heart is light? I must be playful, coldly unconcerned, witty, but what if I am weighed down with misery, what if I am ill, or my child is dying or my wife in anguish!"

He says this, brandishing his fists and rolling his eyes. . . . Then he goes into the bedroom and wakes his wife.

"Nadya," he says, "I am sitting down to write. . . . Please don't let anyone interrupt me. I can't write with children crying or cooks snoring. . . . See, too, that there's tea and . . . steak or something. . . . You know that I can't write without tea. . . . Tea is the one thing that gives me the energy for my work."

Returning to his room he takes off his coat, waistcoat, and boots. He does this very slowly; then, assuming an expression of injured innocence, he sits down to his table.

There is nothing casual, nothing ordinary on his writing-table, down to the veriest trifle everything bears the stamp of a stern, deliberately planned programme. Little busts and photographs of distinguished writers, heaps of rough manuscripts, a volume of Byelinsky with a page turned down, part

of a skull by way of an ash-tray, a sheet of newspaper folded carelessly, but so that a passage is uppermost, boldly marked in blue pencil with the word "disgraceful." There are a dozen sharply pointed pencils and several penholders fitted with new nibs, put in readiness that no accidental breaking of a pen may for a single second interrupt the flight of his creative fancy.

Ivan Yegoritch throws himself back in his chair, and closing his eyes concentrates himself on his subject. He hears his wife shuffling about in her slippers and splitting shavings to heat the samovar. She is hardly awake, that is apparent from the way the knife and the lid of the samovar keep dropping from her hands. Soon the hissing of the samovar and the spluttering of the frying meat reaches him. His wife is still splitting shavings and rattling with the doors and blowers of the stove.

All at once Ivan Yegoritch starts, opens frightened eyes, and begins to sniff the air.

"Heavens! the stove is smoking!" he groans, grimacing with a face of agony. "Smoking! That insufferable woman makes a point of trying to poison me! How, in God's name, am I to write in such surroundings, kindly tell me that?"

He rushes into the kitchen and breaks into a theatrical wail. When a little later, his wife, stepping cautiously on tiptoe, brings him in a glass of tea, he is sitting in an easy chair as before with his eyes closed, absorbed in his article. He does not stir, drums lightly on his forehead with two fingers, and pretends he is not aware of his wife's presence. . . . His face wears an expression of injured innocence.

Like a girl who has been presented with a costly fan, he spends a long time coquetting, grimacing, and posing to himself before he writes the title. . . . He presses his temples, he wriggles, and draws his legs up under his chair as though he were in pain, or half closes his eyes languidly like a cat on the sofa. At last, not without hesitation, he stretches out his hand towards the inkstand, and with an expression as though he were signing a death-warrant, writes the title. . . .

"Mammy, give me some water!" he hears his son's voice.

"Hush!" says his mother. "Daddy's writing! Hush!"

Daddy writes very, very quickly, without corrections or pauses, he has scarcely time to turn over the pages. The busts and portraits of celebrated authors look at his swiftly racing pen and, keeping stock still, seem to be thinking: "Oh my, how you are going it!"

"Sh!" squeaks the pen.

"Sh!" whisper the authors, when his knee jolts the table and they are set trembling.

All at once Krasnyhin draws himself up, lays down his pen and listens. . . . He hears an even monotonous whispering . . . It is Foma Nikolaevitch, the lodger in the next room, saying his prayers.

"I say!" cries Krasnyhin. "Couldn't you, please, say your prayers more quietly? You prevent me from writing!"

"Very sorry. . . ." Foma Nikolaevitch answers timidly.

"Sh!"

After covering five pages, Krasnyhin stretches and looks at his watch.

"Goodness, three o'clock already," he moans. "Other people are asleep while I . . . I alone must work!"

Shattered and exhausted he goes, with his head on one side, to the bedroom to wake his wife, and says in a languid voice:

"Nadya, get me some more tea! I . . . feel weak."

He writes till four o'clock and would readily have written till six if his subject had not been exhausted. Coquetting and posing to himself and the inanimate objects about him, far from any indiscreet, critical eye, tyrannizing and domineering over the little anthill that fate has put in his power are the honey and the salt of his existence. And how different is this despot here at home from the humble, meek, dull-witted little man we are accustomed to see in the editor's offices!

"I am so exhausted that I am afraid I shan't sleep . . ." he says as he gets into bed. "Our work, this cursed, ungrateful, hard labour, exhausts the soul even more than the body. . . . I had better take some bromide. . . . God

knows, if it were not for my family I'd throw up the work. . . . To write to order! It is awful."

He sleeps till twelve or one o'clock in the day, sleeps a sound, healthy sleep. . . . Ah! how he would sleep, what dreams he would have, how he would spread himself if he were to become a well-known writer, an editor, or even a sub-editor!

"He has been writing all night," whispers his wife with a scared expression on her face. "Sh!"

No one dares to speak or move or make a sound. His sleep is something sacred, and the culprit who offends against it will pay dearly for his fault.

"Hush!" floats over the flat. "Hush!"

WHO WAS TO BLAME?

As my uncle Pyotr Demyanitch, a lean, bilious collegiate councillor, exceedingly like a stale smoked fish with a stick through it, was getting ready to go to the high school, where he taught Latin, he noticed that the corner of his grammar was nibbled by mice.

"I say, Praskovya," he said, going into the kitchen and addressing the cook, "how is it we have got mice here? Upon my word! yesterday my top hat was nibbled, to-day they have disfigured my Latin grammar. . . . At this rate they will soon begin eating my clothes!"

"What can I do? I did not bring them in!" answered Praskovya.

"We must do something! You had better get a cat, hadn't you?" . . .

"I've got a cat, but what good is it?"

And Praskovya pointed to the corner where a white kitten, thin as a match, lay curled up asleep beside a broom.

"Why is it no good?" asked Pyotr Demyanitch.

"It's young yet, and foolish. It's not two months old yet."

"H'm. . . . Then it must be trained. It had much better be learning instead of lying there."

Saying this, Pyotr Demyanitch sighed with a careworn air and went out of the kitchen. The kitten raised his head, looked lazily after him, and shut his eyes again.

The kitten lay awake thinking. Of what? Unacquainted with real life, having no store of accumulated impressions, his mental processes could only be instinctive, and he could but picture life in accordance with the conceptions that he had inherited, together with his flesh and blood, from his ancestors, the tigers (*vide* Darwin). His thoughts were of the nature

of day-dreams. His feline imagination pictured something like the Arabian desert, over which flitted shadows closely resembling Praskovya, the stove, the broom. In the midst of the shadows there suddenly appeared a saucer of milk; the saucer began to grow paws, it began moving and displayed a tendency to run; the kitten made a bound, and with a thrill of bloodthirsty sensuality thrust his claws into it. . . . When the saucer had vanished into obscurity a piece of meat appeared, dropped by Praskovya; the meat ran away with a cowardly squeak, but the kitten made a bound and got his claws into it. . . . Everything that rose before the imagination of the young dreamer had for its starting-point leaps, claws, and teeth. . . . The soul of another is darkness, and a cat's soul more than most, but how near the visions just described are to the truth may be seen from the following fact: under the influence of his day-dreams the kitten suddenly leaped up, looked with flashing eyes at Praskovya, ruffled up his coat, and making one bound, thrust his claws into the cook's skirt. Obviously he was born a mouse catcher, a worthy son of his bloodthirsty ancestors. Fate had destined him to be the terror of cellars, store-rooms and cornbins, and had it not been for education . . . we will not anticipate, however.

On his way home from the high school, Pyotr Demyanitch went into a general shop and bought a mouse-trap for fifteen kopecks. At dinner he fixed a little bit of his rissole on the hook, and set the trap under the sofa, where there were heaps of the pupils' old exercise-books, which Praskovya used for various domestic purposes. At six o'clock in the evening, when the worthy Latin master was sitting at the table correcting his pupils' exercises, there was a sudden "klop!" so loud that my uncle started and dropped his pen. He went at once to the sofa and took out the trap. A neat little mouse, the size of a thimble, was sniffing the wires and trembling with fear.

"Aha," muttered Pyotr Demyanitch, and he looked at the mouse malignantly, as though he were about to give him a bad mark. "You are cau—aught, wretch! Wait a bit! I'll teach you to eat my grammar!"

Having gloated over his victim, Pyotr Demyanitch put the mouse-trap on the floor and called:

"Praskovya, there's a mouse caught! Bring the kitten here!"

"I'm coming," responded Praskovya, and a minute later she came in with the descendant of tigers in her arms.

"Capital!" said Pyotr Demyanitch, rubbing his hands. "We will give him a lesson. . . . Put him down opposite the mouse-trap . . . that's it. . . . Let him sniff it and look at it. . . . That's it. . . ."

The kitten looked wonderingly at my uncle, at his arm-chair, sniffed the mouse-trap in bewilderment, then, frightened probably by the glaring lamplight and the attention directed to him, made a dash and ran in terror to the door.

"Stop!" shouted my uncle, seizing him by the tail, "stop, you rascal! He's afraid of a mouse, the idiot! Look! It's a mouse! Look! Well? Look, I tell you!"

Pyotr Demyanitch took the kitten by the scruff of the neck and pushed him with his nose against the mouse-trap.

"Look, you carrion! Take him and hold him, Praskovya. . . . Hold him opposite the door of the trap. . . . When I let the mouse out, you let him go instantly. . . . Do you hear? . . . Instantly let go! Now!"

My uncle assumed a mysterious expression and lifted the door of the trap. . . . The mouse came out irresolutely, sniffed the air, and flew like an arrow under the sofa. . . . The kitten on being released darted under the table with his tail in the air.

"It has got away! got away!" cried Pyotr Demyanitch, looking ferocious. "Where is he, the scoundrel? Under the table? You wait. . . ."

By uncle dragged the kitten from under the table and shook him in the air.

"Wretched little beast," he muttered, smacking him on the ear. "Take that, take that! Will you shirk it next time? Wr-r-r-etch. . . ."

Next day Praskovya heard again the summons.

"Praskovya, there is a mouse caught! Bring the kitten here!"

After the outrage of the previous day the kitten had taken refuge under the stove and had not come out all night. When Praskovya pulled him out and, carrying him by the scruff of the neck into the study, set him down before the mouse-trap, he trembled all over and mewed piteously.

"Come, let him feel at home first," Pyotr Demyanitch commanded. "Let him look and sniff. Look and learn! Stop, plague take you!" he shouted, noticing that the kitten was backing away from the mouse-trap. "I'll thrash you! Hold him by the ear! That's it. . . . Well now, set him down before the trap. . . ."

My uncle slowly lifted the door of the trap . . . the mouse whisked under the very nose of the kitten, flung itself against Praskovya's hand and fled under the cupboard; the kitten, feeling himself free, took a desperate bound and retreated under the sofa.

"He's let another mouse go!" bawled Pyotr Demyanitch. "Do you call that a cat? Nasty little beast! Thrash him! thrash him by the mouse-trap!"

When the third mouse had been caught, the kitten shivered all over at the sight of the mouse-trap and its inmate, and scratched Praskovya's hand. . . . After the fourth mouse my uncle flew into a rage, kicked the kitten, and said:

"Take the nasty thing away! Get rid of it! Chuck it away! It's no earthly use!"

A year passed, the thin, frail kitten had turned into a solid and sagacious tom-cat. One day he was on his way by the back yards to an amatory interview. He had just reached his destination when he suddenly heard a rustle, and thereupon caught sight of a mouse which ran from a water-trough towards a stable; my hero's hair stood on end, he arched his back, hissed, and trembling all over, took to ignominious flight.

Alas! sometimes I feel myself in the ludicrous position of the flying cat. Like the kitten, I had in my day the honour of being taught Latin by my uncle. Now, whenever I chance

to see some work of classical antiquity, instead of being moved to eager enthusiasm, I begin recalling, *ut consecutivum,* the irregular verbs, the sallow grey face of my uncle, the ablative absolute. . . . I turn pale, my hair stands up on my head, and, like the cat, I take to ignominious flight.

GOOSEBERRIES

THE whole sky had been overcast with rain-clouds from early morning; it was a still day, not hot, but heavy, as it is in grey dull weather when the clouds have been hanging over the country for a long while, when one expects rain and it does not come. Ivan Ivanovitch, the veterinary surgeon, and Burkin, the high-school teacher, were already tired from walking, and the fields seemed to them endless. Far ahead of them they could just see the windmills of the village of Mironositskoe; on the right stretched a row of hillocks which disappeared in the distance behind the village, and they both knew that this was the bank of the river, that there were meadows, green willows, homesteads there, and that if one stood on one of the hillocks one could see from it the same vast plain, telegraph-wires, and a train which in the distance looked like a crawling caterpillar, and that in clear weather one could even see the town. Now, in still weather, when all nature seemed mild and dreamy, Ivan Ivanovitch and Burkin were filled with love of that countryside, and both thought how great, how beautiful a land it was.

"Last time we were in Prokofy's barn," said Burkin, "you were about to tell me a story."

"Yes; I meant to tell you about my brother."

Ivan Ivanovitch heaved a deep sigh and lighted a pipe to begin to tell his story, but just at that moment the rain began. And five minutes later heavy rain came down, covering the sky, and it was hard to tell when it would be over. Ivan Ivanovitch and Burkin stopped in hesitation; the dogs, already drenched, stood with their tails between their legs gazing at them feelingly.

"We must take shelter somewhere," said Burkin. "Let us go to Alehin's; it's close by."

"Come along."

They turned aside and walked through mown fields, sometimes going straight forward, sometimes turning to the right, till they came out on the road. Soon they saw poplars, a garden, then the red roofs of barns; there was a gleam of the river, and the view opened on to a broad expanse of water with a windmill and a white bath-house; this was Sofino, where Alehin lived.

The watermill was at work, drowning the sound of the rain; the dam was shaking. Here wet horses with drooping heads were standing near their carts, and men were walking about covered with sacks. It was damp, muddy, and desolate; the water looked cold and malignant. Ivan Ivanovitch and Burkin were already conscious of a feeling of wetness, messiness, and discomfort all over; their feet were heavy with mud, and when, crossing the dam, they went up to the barns, they were silent, as though they were angry with one another.

In one of the barns there was the sound of a winnowing machine, the door was open, and clouds of dust were coming from it. In the doorway was standing Alehin himself, a man of forty, tall and stout, with long hair, more like a professor or an artist than a landowner. He had on a white shirt that badly needed washing, a rope for a belt, drawers instead of trousers, and his boots, too, were plastered up with mud and straw. His eyes and nose were black with dust. He recognized Ivan Ivanovitch and Burkin, and was apparently much delighted to see them.

"Go into the house, gentlemen," he said, smiling; "I'll come directly, this minute."

It was a big two-storeyed house. Alehin lived in the lower story, with arched ceilings and little windows, where the bailiffs had once lived; here everything was plain, and there was a smell of rye bread, cheap vodka, and harness. He went upstairs into the best rooms only on rare occasions, when visitors came. Ivan Ivanovitch and Burkin were met in the

house by a maid-servant, a young woman so beautiful that they both stood still and looked at one another.

"You can't imagine how delighted I am to see you, my friends," said Alehin, going into the hall with them. "It is a surprise! Pelagea," he said, addressing the girl, "give our visitors something to change into. And, by the way, I will change too. Only I must first go and wash, for I almost think I have not washed since spring. Wouldn't you like to come into the bath-house? and meanwhile they will get things ready here."

Beautiful Pelagea, looking so refined and soft, brought them towels and soap, and Alehin went to the bath-house with his guests.

"It's a long time since I had a wash," he said, undressing. "I have got a nice bath-house, as you see—my father built it —but I somehow never have time to wash."

He sat down on the steps and soaped his long hair and his neck, and the water round him turned brown.

"Yes, I must say," said Ivan Ivanovitch meaningly, looking at his head.

"It's a long time since I washed . . ." said Alehin with embarrassment, giving himself a second soaping, and the water near him turned dark blue, like ink.

Ivan Ivanovitch went outside, plunged into the water with a loud splash, and swam in the rain, flinging his arms out wide. He stirred the water into waves which set the white lilies bobbing up and down; he swam to the very middle of the millpond and dived, and came up a minute later in another place, and swam on, and kept on diving, trying to touch the bottom.

"Oh, my goodness!" he repeated continually, enjoying himself thoroughly. "Oh, my goodness!" He swam to the mill, talked to the peasants there, then returned and lay on his back in the middle of the pond, turning his face to the rain. Burkin and Alehin were dressed and ready to go, but he still went on swimming and diving. "Oh, my goodness! . . ." he said.. "Oh, Lord, have mercy on me! . . ."

"That's enough!" Burkin shouted to him.

They went back to the house. And only when the lamp was lighted in the big drawing-room upstairs, and Burkin and Ivan Ivanovitch, attired in silk dressing-gowns and warm slippers, were sitting in arm-chairs; and Alehin, washed and combed, in a new coat, was walking about the drawing-room, evidently enjoying the feeling of warmth, cleanliness, dry clothes, and light shoes; and when lovely Pelagea, stepping noiselessly on the carpet and smiling softly, handed tea and jam on a tray —only then Ivan Ivanovitch began on his story, and it seemed as though not only Burkin and Alehin were listening, but also the ladies, young and old, and the officers who looked down upon them sternly and calmly from their gold frames.

"There are two of us brothers," he began—"I, Ivan Ivanovitch, and my brother, Nikolay Ivanovitch, two years younger. I went in for a learned profession and became a veterinary surgeon, while Nikolay sat in a government office from the time he was nineteen. Our father, Tchimsha-Himalaisky, was a kantonist, but he rose to be an officer and left us a little estate and the rank of nobility. After his death the little estate went in debts and legal expenses; but, anyway, we had spent our childhood running wild in the country. Like peasant children, we passed our days and nights in the fields and the woods, looked after horses, stripped the bark off the trees, fished, and so on. . . . And, you know, whoever has once in his life caught perch or has seen the migrating of the thrushes in autumn, watched how they float in flocks over the village on bright, cool days, he will never be a real townsman, and will have a yearning for freedom to the day of his death. My brother was miserable in the government office. Years passed by, and he went on sitting in the same place, went on writing the same papers and thinking of one and the same thing—how to get into the country. And this yearning by degrees passed into a definite desire, into a dream of buying himself a little farm somewhere on the banks of a river or a lake.

"He was a gentle, good-natured fellow, and I was fond of him, but I never sympathized with this desire to shut himself

up for the rest of his life in a little farm of his own. It's the correct thing to say that a man needs no more than six feet of earth. But six feet is what a corpse needs, not a man. And they say, too, now, that if our intellectual classes are attracted to the land and yearn for a farm, it's a good thing. But these farms are just the same as six feet of earth. To retreat from town, from the struggle, from the bustle of life, to retreat and bury oneself in one's farm—it's not life, it's egoism, laziness, it's monasticism of a sort, but monasticism without good works. A man does not need six feet of earth or a farm, but the whole globe, all nature, where he can have room to display all the qualities and peculiarities of his free spirit.

"My brother Nikolay, sitting in his government office, dreamed of how he would eat his own cabbages, which would fill the whole yard with such a savoury smell, take his meals on the green grass, sleep in the sun, sit for whole hours on the seat by the gate gazing at the fields and the forest. Gardening books and the agricultural hints in calendars were his delight, his favourite spiritual sustenance; he enjoyed reading newspapers, too, but the only things he read in them were the advertisements of so many acres of arable land and a grass meadow with farm-houses and buildings, a river, a garden, a mill and millponds, for sale. And his imagination pictured the garden-paths, flowers and fruit, starling cotes, the carp in the pond, and all that sort of thing, you know. These imaginary pictures were of different kinds according to the advertisements which he came across, but for some reason in every one of them he had always to have gooseberries. He could not imagine a homestead, he could not picture an idyllic nook, without gooseberries.

" 'Country life has its conveniences,' he would sometimes say. 'You sit on the verandah and you drink tea, while your ducks swim on the pond, there is a delicious smell everywhere, and . . . and the gooseberries are growing.'

"He used to draw a map of his property, and in every map there were the same things—(*a*) house for the family, (*b*)

servants' quarters, (*c*) kitchen-garden, (*d*) gooseberry-bushes. He lived parsimoniously, was frugal in food and drink, his clothes were beyond description; he looked like a beggar, but kept on saving and putting money in the bank. He grew fearfully avaricious. I did not like to look at him, and I used to give him something and send him presents for Christmas and Easter, but he used to save that too. Once a man is absorbed by an idea there is no doing anything with him.

"Years passed: he was transferred to another province. He was over forty, and he was still reading the advertisements in the papers and saving up. Then I heard he was married. Still with the same object of buying a farm and having gooseberries, he married an elderly and ugly widow without a trace of feeling for her, simply because she had filthy lucre. He went on living frugally after marrying her, and kept her short of food, while he put her money in the bank in his name.

"Her first husband had been a postmaster, and with him she was accustomed to pies and home-made wines, while with her second husband she did not get enough black bread; she began to pine away with this sort of life, and three years later she gave up her soul to God. And I need hardly say that my brother never for one moment imagined that he was responsible for her death. Money, like vodka, makes a man queer. In our town there was a merchant who, before he died, ordered a plateful of honey and ate up all his money and lottery tickets with the honey, so that no one might get the benefit of it. While I was inspecting cattle at a railway-station, a cattle-dealer fell under an engine and had his leg cut off. We carried him into the waiting-room, the blood was flowing—it was a horrible thing—and he kept asking them to look for his leg and was very much worried about it; there were twenty roubles in the boot on the leg that had been cut off, and he was afraid they would be lost."

"That's a story from a different opera," said Burkin.

"After his wife's death," Ivan Ivanovitch went on, after thinking for half a minute, "my brother began looking out for an estate for himself. Of course, you may look about for

five years and yet end by making a mistake, and buying something quite different from what you have dreamed of. My brother Nikolay bought through an agent a mortgaged estate of three hundred and thirty acres, with a house for the family, with servants' quarters, with a park, but with no orchard, no gooseberry-bushes, and no duck-pond; there was a river, but the water in it was the colour of coffee, because on one side of the estate there was a brickyard and on the other a factory for burning bones. But Nikolay Ivanovitch did not grieve much; he ordered twenty gooseberry-bushes, planted them, and began living as a country gentleman. .

"Last year I went to pay him a visit. I thought I would go and see what it was like. In his letters my brother called his estate 'Tchumbaroklov Waste, alias Himalaiskoe.' I reached 'alias Himalaiskoe' in the afternoon. It was hot. Everywhere there were ditches, fences, hedges, fir-trees planted in rows, and there was no knowing how to get to the yard, where to put one's horse. I went up to the house, and was met by a fat red dog that looked like a pig. It wanted to bark, but it was too lazy. The cook, a fat, barefooted woman, came out of the kitchen, and she, too, looked like a pig, and said that her master was resting after dinner. I went in to see my brother. He was sitting up in bed with a quilt over his legs; he had grown older, fatter, wrinkled; his cheeks, his nose, and his mouth all stuck out—he looked as though he might begin grunting into the quilt at any moment.

"We embraced each other, and shed tears of joy and of sadness at the thought that we had once been young and now were both grey-headed and near the grave. He dressed, and led me out to show me the estate.

" 'Well, how are you getting on here?' I asked.

" 'Oh, all right, thank God; I am getting on very well.'

"He was no more a poor timid clerk, but a real landowner, a gentleman. He was already accustomed to it, had grown used to it, and liked it. He ate a great deal, went to the bath-house, was growing stout, was already at law with the village commune and both factories, and was very much

offended when the peasants did not call him 'Your Honour.' And he concerned himself with the salvation of his soul in a substantial gentlemanly manner, and performed deeds of charity, not simply, but with an air of consequence. And what deeds of charity! He treated the peasants for every sort of disease with soda and castor oil, and on his name-day had a thanksgiving service in the middle of the village, and then treated the peasants to a gallon of vodka—he thought that was the right thing to do. Oh, those horrible gallons of vodka! One day the fat landowner hauls the peasants up before the district captain for trespass, and next day, in honour of a holiday, treats them to a gallon of vodka, and they drink and shout 'Hurrah!' and when they are drunk bow down to his feet. A change of life for the better, and being well-fed and idle develop in a Russian the most insolent self-conceit. Nikolay Ivanovitch, who at one time in the government office was afraid to have any views of his own, now could say nothing that was not gospel truth, and uttered such truths in the tone of a prime minister. 'Education is essential, but for the peasants it is premature.' 'Corporal punishment is harmful as a rule, but in some cases it is necessary and there is nothing to take its place.'

"'I know the peasants and understand how to treat them,' he would say. 'The peasants like me. I need only to hold up my little finger and the peasants will do anything I like.'

"And all this, observe, was uttered with a wise, benevolent smile. He repeated twenty times over 'We noblemen,' 'I as a noble'; obviously he did not remember that our grandfather was a peasant, and our father a soldier. Even our surname Tchimsha-Himalaisky, in reality so incongruous, seemed to him now melodious, distinguished, and very agreeable.

"But the point now is not he, but myself. I want to tell you about the change that took place in me during the brief hours I spent at his country place. In the evening, when we were drinking tea, the cook put on the table a plateful of gooseberries. They were not bought, but his own gooseberries, gathered for the first time since the bushes were

planted. Nikolay Ivanovitch laughed and looked for a minute in silence at the gooseberries, with tears in his eyes; he could not speak for excitement. Then he put one gooseberry in his mouth, looked at me with the triumph of a child who has at last received his favourite toy, and said:

"'How delicious!'

"And he ate them greedily, continually repeating, 'Ah, how delicious! Do taste them!'

"They were sour and unripe, but, as Pushkin says:

> "'Dearer to us the falsehood that exalts
> Than hosts of baser truths.'

"I saw a happy man whose cherished dream was so obviously fulfilled, who had attained his object in life, who had gained what he wanted, who was satisfied with his fate and himself. There is always, for some reason, an element of sadness mingled with my thoughts of human happiness, and, on this occasion, at the sight of a happy man I was overcome by an oppressive feeling that was close upon despair. It was particularly oppressive at night. A bed was made up for me in the room next to my brother's bedroom, and I could hear that he was awake, and that he kept getting up and going to the plate of gooseberries and taking one. I reflected how many satisfied, happy people there really are! What a suffocating force it is! You look at life: the insolence and idleness of the strong, the ignorance and brutishness of the weak, incredible poverty all about us, overcrowding, degeneration, drunkenness, hypocrisy, lying. . . . Yet all is calm and stillness in the houses and in the streets; of the fifty thousand living in a town, there is not one who would cry out, who would give vent to his indignation aloud. We see the people going to market for provisions, eating by day, sleeping by night, talking their silly nonsense, getting married, growing old, serenely escorting their dead to the cemetery; but we do not see and we do not hear those who suffer, and what is terrible in life goes on somewhere behind the scenes. . . . Everything is quiet and peaceful, and nothing protests but mute statistics: so many

people gone out of their minds, so many gallons of vodka drunk, so many children dead from malnutrition. . . . And this order of things is evidently necessary; evidently the happy man only feels at ease because the unhappy bear their burdens in silence, and without that silence happiness would be impossible. It's a case of general hypnotism. There ought to be behind the door of every happy, contented man some one standing with a hammer continually reminding him with a tap that there are unhappy people; that however happy he may be, life will show him her laws sooner or later, trouble will come for him—disease, poverty, losses, and no one will see or hear, just as now he neither sees nor hears others. But there is no man with a hammer; the happy man lives at his ease, and trivial daily cares faintly agitate him like the wind in the aspen-tree—and all goes well.

"That night I realized that I, too, was happy and contented," Ivan Ivanovitch went on, getting up. "I, too, at dinner and at the hunt liked to lay down the law of life and religion, and the way to manage the peasantry. I, too, used to say that science was light, that culture was essential, but for the simple people reading and writing was enough for the time. Freedom is a blessing, I used to say; we can no more do without it than without air, but we must wait a little. Yes, I used to talk like that, and now I ask, 'For what reason are we to wait?'" asked Ivan Ivanovitch, looking angrily at Burkin. "Why wait, I ask you? What grounds have we for waiting? I shall be told, it can't be done all at once; every idea takes shape in life gradually, in its due time. But who is it says that? Where is the proof that it's right? You will fall back upon the natural order of things, the uniformity of phenomena; but is there order and uniformity in the fact that I, a living, thinking man, stand over a chasm and wait for it to close of itself, or to fill up with mud at the very time when perhaps I might leap over it or build a bridge across it? And again, wait for the sake of what? Wait till there's no strength to live? And meanwhile one must live, and one wants to live!

"I went away from my brother's early in the morning, and ever since then it has been unbearable for me to be in town. I am oppressed by its peace and quiet; I am afraid to look at the windows, for there is no spectacle more painful to me now than the sight of a happy family sitting round the table drinking tea. I am old and not fit for the struggle; I am not even capable of hatred; I can only grieve inwardly, feel irritated and vexed; but at night my head is hot from the rush of ideas, and I cannot sleep. . . . Ah, if I were young!"

Ivan Ivanovitch walked backwards and forwards in excitement and repeated: "If I were young!"

He suddenly went up to Alehin and began pressing first one of his hands and then the other.

"Pavel Konstantinovitch," he said in an imploring voice, "don't be calm and contented, don't let yourself be put to sleep! While you are young, strong, confident, be not weary in well-doing! There is no happiness, and there ought not to be; but if there is a meaning and an object in life, that meaning and object is not our happiness, but something greater and more rational. Do good!"

And all this Ivan Ivanovitch said with a pitiful, imploring smile, as though he were asking him a personal favour.

Then all three sat in arm-chairs at different ends of the drawing-room and were silent. Ivan Ivanovitch's story had not satisfied either Burkin or Alehin. When the generals and ladies gazed down from their gilt frames, looking in the dusk as though they were alive, it was dreary to listen to the story of the poor clerk who ate gooseberries. They felt inclined, for some reason, to talk about elegant people, about women. And their sitting in the drawing-room where everything—the chandeliers in their covers, the arm-chairs, and the carpet under their feet—reminded them that those very people who were now looking down from their frames had once moved about, sat, drunk tea in this room, and the fact that lovely Pelagea was moving noiselessly about was better than any story.

Alehin was fearfully sleepy; he had got up early, before three o'clock in the morning, to look after his work, and now his eyes were closing; but he was afraid his visitors might tell some interesting story after he had gone, and he lingered on. He did not go into the question whether what Ivan Ivanovitch had just said was right and true. His visitors did not talk of groats, nor of hay, nor of tar, but of something that had no direct bearing on his life, and he was glad and wanted them to go on.

"It's bed-time, though," said Burkin, getting up. "Allow me to wish you good-night."

Alehin said good-night and went downstairs to his own domain, while the visitors remained upstairs. They were both taken for the night to a big room where there stood two old wooden beds decorated with carvings, and in the corner was an ivory crucifix. The big cool beds, which had been made by the lovely Pelagea, smelt agreeably of clean linen.

Ivan Ivanovitch undressed in silence and got into bed.

"Lord forgive us sinners!" he said, and put his head under the quilt.

His pipe lying on the table smelt strongly of stale tobacco, and Burkin could not sleep for a long while, and kept wondering where the oppressive smell came from.

The rain was pattering on the window-panes all night.

AT HOME

I

THE Don railway. A quiet, cheerless station, white and solitary in the steppe, with its walls baking in the sun, without a speck of shade, and, it seems, without a human being. The train goes on after leaving one here; the sound of it is scarcely audible and dies away at last. Outside the station it is a desert, and there are no horses but one's own. One gets into the carriage—which is so pleasant after the train—and is borne along the road through the steppe, and by degrees there are unfolded before one views such as one does not see near Moscow—immense, endless, fascinating in their monotony. The steppe, the steppe, and nothing more; in the distance an ancient barrow or a windmill; ox-waggons laden with coal trail by. . . . Solitary birds fly low over the plain, and a drowsy feeling comes with the monotonous beat of their wings. It is hot. Another hour or so passes, and still the steppe, the steppe, and still in the distance the barrow. The driver tells you something, some long unnecessary tale, pointing into the distance with his whip. And tranquillity takes possession of the soul; one is loth to think of the past. . . .

A carriage with three horses had been sent to fetch Vera Ivanovna Kardin. The driver put in her luggage and set the harness to rights.

"Everything just as it always has been," said Vera, looking about her. "I was a little girl when I was here last, ten years ago. I remember old Boris came to fetch me then. Is he still living, I wonder?"

The driver made no reply, but, like a Little Russian, looked at her angrily and clambered on to the box.

It was a twenty-mile drive from the station, and Vera,

too, abandoned herself to the charm of the steppe, forgot the past, and thought only of the wide expanse, of the freedom. Healthy, clever, beautiful, and young—she was only three-and-twenty—she had hitherto lacked nothing in her life but just this space and freedom.

The steppe, the steppe. . . . The horses trotted, the sun rose higher and higher; and it seemed to Vera that never in her childhood had the steppe been so rich, so luxuriant in June; the wild flowers were green, yellow, lilac, white, and a fragrance rose from them and from the warmed earth; and there were strange blue birds along the roadside. . . . Vera had long got out of the habit of praying, but now, struggling with drowsiness, she murmured:

"Lord, grant that I may be happy here."

And there was peace and sweetness in her soul, and she felt as though she would have been glad to drive like that all her life, looking at the steppe.

Suddenly there was a deep ravine overgrown with oak saplings and alder-trees; there was a moist feeling in the air—there must have been a spring at the bottom. On the near side, on the very edge of the ravine, a covey of patridges rose noisily. Vera remembered that in old days they used to go for evening walks to this ravine; so it must be near home! And now she could actually see the poplars, the barns, black smoke rising on one side—they were burning old straw. And there was Auntie Dasha coming to meet her and waving her handkerchief; grandfather was on the terrace. Oh dear, how happy she was!

"My darling, my darling!" cried her aunt, shrieking as though she were in hysterics. "Our real mistress has come! You must understand you are our mistress, you are our queen! Here everything is yours! My darling, my beauty, I am not your aunt, but your willing slave!"

Vera had no relations but her aunt and her grandfather; her mother had long been dead; her father, an engineer, had died three months before at Kazan, on his way from Siberia. Her grandfather had a big grey beard. He was stout, red-

faced, and asthmatic, and walked leaning on a cane and sticking his stomach out. Her aunt, a lady of forty-two, drawn in tightly at the waist and fashionably dressed with sleeves high on the shoulder, evidently tried to look young and was still anxious to be charming; she walked with tiny steps with a wriggle of her spine.

"Will you love us?" she said, embracing Vera. "You are not proud?"

At her grandfather's wish there was a thanksgiving service, then they spent a long while over dinner—and Vera's new life began. She was given the best room. All the rugs in the house had been put in it, and a great many flowers; and when at night she lay down in her snug, wide, very soft bed and covered herself with a silk quilt that smelt of old clothes long stored away, she laughed with pleasure. Auntie Dasha came in for a minute to wish her good-night.

"Here you are home again, thank God," she said sitting down on the bed. "As you see, we get along very well and have everything we want. There's only one thing: your grandfather is in a poor way! A terribly poor way! He is short of breath and he has begun to lose his memory. And you remember how strong, how vigorous, he used to be! There was no doing anything with him. . . . In old days, if the servants didn't please him or anything else went wrong, he would jump up at once and shout: 'Twenty-five strokes! The birch!' But now he has grown milder and you never hear him. And besides, times are changed, my precious; one mayn't beat them nowadays. Of course, they oughtn't to be beaten, but they need looking after."

"And are they beaten now, auntie?" asked Vera.

"The steward beats them sometimes, but I never do, bless their hearts! And your grandfather sometimes lifts his stick from old habit, but he never beats them."

Auntie Dasha yawned and crossed herself over her mouth and her right ear.

"It's not dull here?" Vera inquired.

"What shall I say? There are no landowners living here

now, but there have been works built near, darling, and there are lots of engineers, doctors, and mine managers. Of course, we have theatricals and concerts, but we play cards more than anything. They come to us, too. Dr. Neshtchapov from the works comes to see us—such a handsome, interesting man! He fell in love with your photograph. I made up my mind: he is Verotchka's destiny, I thought. He's young, handsome, he has means—a good match, in fact. And of course you're a match for any one. You're of good family. The place is mortgaged, it's true, but it's in good order and not neglected; there is my share in it, but it will all come to you; I am your willing slave. And my brother, your father, left you fifteen thousand roubles. . . . But I see you can't keep your eyes open. Sleep, my child."

Next day Vera spent a long time walking round the house. The garden, which was old and unattractive, lying inconveniently upon the slope, had no paths, and was utterly neglected; probably the care of it was regarded as an unnecessary item in the management. There were numbers of grass-snakes. Hoopoes flew about under the trees calling "Oo-too-toot!" as though they were trying to remind her of something. At the bottom of the hill there was a river overgrown with tall reeds, and half a mile beyond the river was the village. From the garden Vera went out into the fields; looking into the distance, thinking of her new life in her own home, she kept trying to grasp what was in store for her. The space, the lovely peace of the steppe, told her that happiness was near at hand, and perhaps was here already; thousands of people, in fact, would have said: "What happiness to be young, healthy, well-educated, to be living on one's own estate!" And at the same time the endless plain, all alike, without one living soul, frightened her, and at moments it was clear to her that its peaceful green vastness would swallow up her life and reduce it to nothingness. She was very young, elegant, fond of life; she had finished her studies at an aristocratic boarding-school, had learnt three languages, had read a great deal, had travelled with her father—and could

all this have been meant to lead to nothing but settling down in a remote country-house in the steppe, and wandering day after day from the garden into the fields and from the fields into the garden to while away the time, and then sitting at home listening to her grandfather's breathing? But what could she do? Where could she go? She could find no answer, and as she was returning home she doubted whether she would be happy here, and thought that driving home from the station was far more interesting than living here.

Dr. Neshtchapov drove over from the works. He was a doctor, but three years previously he had taken a share in the works, and had become one of the partners; and now he no longer looked upon medicine as his chief vocation, though he still practised. In appearance he was a pale, dark man in a white waistcoat, with a good figure; but to guess what there was in his heart and his brain was difficult. He kissed Auntie Dasha's hand on greeting her, and was continually leaping up to set a chair or give his seat to some one. He was very silent and grave all the while, and, when he did speak, it was for some reason impossible to hear and understand his first sentence, though he spoke correctly and not in a low voice.

"You play the piano?" he asked Vera, and immediately leapt up, as she had dropped her handkerchief.

He stayed from midday to midnight without speaking, and Vera found him very unattractive. She thought that a white waistcoat in the country was bad form, and his elaborate politeness, his manners, and his pale, serious face with dark eyebrows, were mawkish; and it seemed to her that he was perpetually silent, probably because he was stupid. When he had gone her aunt said enthusiastically:

"Well? Isn't he charming?"

II

Auntie Dasha looked after the estate. Tightly laced, with jingling bracelets on her wrists, she went into the kitchen, the granary, the cattle-yard, tripping along with tiny steps,

wriggling her spine; and whenever she talked to the steward or to the peasants, she used, for some reason, to put on a pince-nez. Vera's grandfather always sat in the same place, playing patience or dozing. He ate a very great deal at dinner and supper; they gave him the dinner cooked to-day and what was left from yesterday, and cold pie left from Sunday, and salt meat from the servants' dinner, and he ate it all greedily. And every dinner left on Vera such an impression, that when she saw afterwards a flock of sheep driven by, or flour being brought from the mill, she thought, "Grandfather will eat that." For the most part he was silent, absorbed in eating or in patience; but it sometimes happened at dinner that at the sight of Vera he would be touched and say tenderly:

"My only grandchild! Verotchka!"

And tears would glisten in his eyes. Or his face would turn suddenly crimson, his neck would swell, he would look with fury at the servants, and ask, tapping with his stick:

"Why haven't you brought the horse-radish?"

In winter he led a perfectly inactive existence; in summer he sometimes drove out into the fields to look at the oats and the hay; and when he came back he would flourish his stick and declare that everything was neglected now that he was not there to look after it.

"Your grandfather is out of humour," Auntie Dasha would whisper. "But it's nothing now to what it used to be in the old days: 'Twenty-five strokes! The birch!' "

Her aunt complained that every one had grown lazy, that no one did anything, and that the estate yielded no profit. Indeed, there was no systematic farming; they ploughed and sowed a little simply from habit, and in reality did nothing and lived in idleness. Meanwhile there was a running to and fro, reckoning and worrying all day long; the bustle in the house began at five o'clock in the morning; there were continual sounds of "Bring it," "Fetch it," "Make haste," and by the evening the servants were utterly exhausted. Auntie

Dasha changed her cooks and her housemaids every week; sometimes she discharged them for immorality; sometimes they went of their own accord, complaining that they were worked to death. None of the village people would come to the house as servants; Auntie Dasha had to hire them from a distance. There was only one girl from the village living in the house, Alyona, and she stayed because her whole family —old people and children—were living upon her wages. This Alyona, a pale, rather stupid little thing, spent the whole day turning out the rooms, waiting at table, heating the stoves, sewing, washing; but it always seemed as though she were only pottering about, treading heavily with her boots, and were nothing but a hindrance in the house. In her terror that she might be dismissed and sent home, she often dropped and broke the crockery, and they stopped the value of it out of her wages, and then her mother and grandmother would come and bow down at Auntie Dasha's feet.

Once a week or sometimes oftener visitors would arrive. Her aunt would come to Vera and say:

"You should sit a little with the visitors, or else they'll think that you are stuck up."

Vera would go in to the visitors and play *vint* with them for hours together, or play the piano for the visitors to dance; her aunt, in high spirits and breathless from dancing, would come up and whisper to her:

"Be nice to Marya Nikiforovna."

On the sixth of December, St. Nikolay's Day, a large party of about thirty arrived all at once; they played *vint* until late at night, and many of them stayed the night. In the morning they sat down to cards again, then they had dinner, and when Vera went to her room after dinner to rest from conversation and tobacco smoke, there were visitors there too, and she almost wept in despair. And when they began to get ready to go in the evening, she was so pleased they were going at last, that she said:

"Do stay a little longer."

She felt exhausted by the visitors and constrained by their presence; yet every day, as soon as it began to grow dark, something drew her out of the house, and she went out to pay visits either at the works or at some neighbours', and then there were cards, dancing, forfeits, suppers. . . . The young people in the works or in the mines sometimes sang Little Russian songs, and sang them very well. It made one sad to hear them sing. Or they all gathered together in one room and talked in the dusk of the mines, of the treasures that had once been buried in the steppes, of Saur's Grave. . . . Later on, as they talked, a shout of "Help!" sometimes reached them. It was a drunken man going home, or some one was being robbed by the pit near by. Or the wind howled in the chimneys, the shutters banged; then, soon afterwards, they would hear the uneasy church bell, as the snow-storm began.

At all the evening parties, picnics, and dinners, Auntie Dasha was invariably the most interesting woman and the doctor the most interesting man. There was very little reading either at the works or at the country-houses; they played only marches and polkas; and the young people always argued hotly about things they did not understand, and the effect was crude. The discussions were loud and heated, but, strange to say, Vera had nowhere else met people so indifferent and careless as these. They seemed to have no fatherland, no religion, no public interests. When they talked of literature or debated some abstract question, it could be seen from Dr. Neshtchapov's face that the question had no interest for him whatever, and that for long, long years he had read nothing and cared to read nothing. Serious and expressionless, like a badly painted portrait, for ever in his white waistcoat, he was silent and incomprehensible as before; but the ladies, young and old, thought him interesting and were enthusiastic over his manners. They envied Vera, who appeared to attract him very much. And Vera always came away from the visits with a feeling of vexation, vowing inwardly to remain at home; but the day passed, the evening came, and she hurried

off to the works again, and it was like that almost all the winter.

She ordered books and magazines, and used to read them in her room. And she read at night, lying in bed. When the clock in the corridor struck two or there, and her temples were beginning to ache from reading, she sat up in bed and thought, "What am I to do? Where am I to go?" Accursed, importunate question, to which there were a number of ready-made answers, and in reality no answer at all.

Oh, how noble, how holy, how picturesque it must be to serve the people, to alleviate their sufferings, to enlighten them! But she, Vera, did not know the people. And how could she go to them? They were strange and uninteresting to her; she could not endure the stuffy smell of the huts, the pot-house oaths, the unwashed children, the women's talk of illnesses. To walk over the snow-drifts, to feel cold, then to sit in a stifling hut, to teach children she disliked—no, she would rather die! And to teach the peasants' children while Auntie Dasha made money out of the pot-houses and fined the peasants—it was too great a farce! What a lot of talk there was of schools, of village libraries, of universal education; but if all these engineers, these mine-owners and ladies of her acquaintance, had not been hypocrites, and really had believed that enlightenment was necessary, they would not have paid the schoolmasters fifteen roubles a month as they did now, and would not have let them go hungry. And the schools and the talk about ignorance—it was all only to stifle the voice of conscience because they were ashamed to own fifteen or thirty thousand acres and to be indifferent to the peasants' lot. Here the ladies said about Dr. Neshtchapov that he was a kind man and had built a school at the works. Yes, he had built a school out of the old bricks at the works for some eight hundred roubles, and they sang the prayer for "long life" to him when the building was opened, but there was no chance of his giving up his shares, and it certainly never entered his head that the peasants were human beings like himself, and that they, too, needed uni-

versity teaching, and not merely lessons in these wretched schools.

And Vera felt full of anger against herself and every one else. She took up a book again and tried to read it, but soon afterwards sat down and thought again. To become a doctor? But to do that one must pass an examination in Latin; besides, she had an invincible repugnance to corpses and disease. It would be nice to become a mechanic, a judge, a commander of a steamer, a scientist; to do something into which she could put all her powers, physical and spiritual, and to be tired out and sleep soundly at night; to give up her life to something that would make her an interesting person, able to attract interesting people, to love, to have a real family of her own. . . . But what was she to do? How was she to begin?

One Sunday in Lent her aunt came into her room early in the morning to fetch her umbrella. Vera was sitting up in bed clasping her head in her hands, thinking.

"You ought to go to church, darling," said her aunt, "or people will think you are not a believer."

Vera made no answer.

"I see you are dull, poor child," said Auntie Dasha, sinking on her knees by the bedside; she adored Vera. "Tell me the truth, are you bored?"

"Dreadfully."

"My beauty, my queen, I am your willing slave, I wish you nothing but good and happiness. . . . Tell me, why don't you want to marry Neshtchapov? What more do you want, my child? You must forgive me, darling; you can't pick and choose like this, we are not princes. . . . Time is passing, you are not seventeen. . . . And I don't understand it! He loves you, idolises you!"

"Oh, mercy!" said Vera with vexation. "How can I tell? He sits dumb and never says a word."

"He's shy, darling. . . . He's afraid you'll refuse him!"

And when her aunt had gone away, Vera remained standing in the middle of her room uncertain whether to dress or to go

back to bed. The bed was hateful; if one looked out of the window there were the bare trees, the grey snow, the hateful jackdaws, the pigs that her grandfather would eat. . . .

"Yes, after all, perhaps I'd better get married!" she thought.

III

For two days Auntie Dasha went about with a tear-stained and heavily powdered face, and at dinner she kept sighing and looking towards the ikon. And it was impossible to make out what was the matter with her. But at last she made up her mind, went in to Vera, and said in a casual way:

"The fact is, child, we have to pay interest on the bank loan, and the tenant hasn't paid his rent. Will you let me pay it out of the fifteen thousand your papa left you?"

All day afterwards Auntie Dasha spent in making cherry jam in the garden. Alyona, with her cheeks flushed with the heat, ran to and from the garden to the house and back again to the cellar.

When Auntie Dasha was making jam with a very serious face as though she were performing a religious rite, and her short sleeves displayed her strong, little, despotic hands and arms, and when the servants ran about incessantly, bustling about the jam which they would never taste, there was always a feeling of martyrdom in the air. . . .

The garden smelt of hot cherries. The sun had set, the charcoal stove had been carried away, but the pleasant, sweetish smell still lingered in the air. Vera sat on a bench in the garden and watched a new labourer, a young soldier, not of the neighbourhood, who was, by her express orders, making new paths. He was cutting the turf with a spade and heaping it up on a barrow.

"Where were you serving?" Vera asked him.

"At Berdyansk."

"And where are you going now? Home?"

"No," answered the labourer. "I have no home."

"But where were you born and brought up?"

"In the province of Oryol. Till I went into the army I

lived with my mother, in my step-father's house; my mother was the head of the house, and people looked up to her, and while she lived I was cared for. But while I was in the army I got a letter telling me my mother was dead. . . . And now I don't seem to care to go home. It's not my own father, so it's not like my own home."

"Then your father is dead?"

"I don't know. I am illegitimate."

At that moment Auntie Dasha appeared at the window and said:

"Il ne faut pas parler aux gens. . . .Go into the kitchen, my good man. You can tell your story there," she said to the soldier.

And then came as yesterday and every day supper, reading, a sleepless night, and endless thinking about the same thing. At three o'clock the sun rose; Alyona was already busy in the corridor, and Vera was not asleep yet and was trying to read. She heard the creak of the barrow: it was the new labourer at work in the garden. . . . Vera sat at the open window with a book, dozed, and watched the soldier making the paths for her, and that interested her. The paths were as even and level as a leather strap, and it was pleasant to imagine what they would be like when they were strewn with yellow sand.

She could see her aunt come out of the house soon after five o'clock, in a pink wrapper and curl-papers. She stood on the steps for three minutes without speaking, and then said to the soldier:

"Take your passport and gō in peace. I can't have any one illegitimate in my house."

An oppressive, angry feeling sank like a stone on Vera's heart. She was indignant with her aunt, she hated her; she was so sick of her aunt that her heart was full of misery and loathing. But what was she to do? To stop her mouth? To be rude to her? But what would be the use? Suppose she struggled with her, got rid of her, made her harmless, prevented her grandfather from flourishing his stick—what would be the

use of it? It would be like killing one mouse or one snake in the boundless steppe. The vast expanse, the long winters, the monotony and dreariness of life, instil a sense of helplessness; the position seems hopeless, and one wants to do nothing—everything is useless.

Alyona came in, and bowing low to Vera, began carrying out the arm-chairs to beat the dust out of them.

"You have chosen a time to clean up," said Vera with annoyance. "Go away."

Alyona was overwhelmed, and in her terror could not understand what was wanted of her. She began hurriedly tidying up the dressing-table.

"Go out of the room, I tell you," Vera shouted, turning cold; she had never had such an oppressive feeling before. "Go away!"

Alyona uttered a sort of moan, like a bird, and dropped Vera's gold watch on the carpet.

"Go away!" Vera shrieked in a voice not her own, leaping up and trembling all over. "Send her away; she worries me to death!" she went on, walking rapidly after Alyona down the passage, stamping her feet. "Go away! Birch her! Beat her!"

Then suddenly she came to herself, and just as she was, unwashed, uncombed, in her dressing-gown and slippers, she rushed out of the house. She ran to the familiar ravine and hid herself there among the sloe-trees, so that she might see no one and be seen by no one. Lying there motionless on the grass, she did not weep, she was not horror-stricken, but gazing at the sky open-eyed, she reflected coldly and clearly that something had happened which she could never forget and for which she could never forgive herself all her life.

"No, I can't go on like this," she thought. "It's time to take myself in hand, or there'll be no end to it. . . . I can't go on like this. . . ."

At midday Dr. Neshtchapov drove by the ravine on his way to the house. She saw him and made up her mind that

she would begin a new life, and that she would make herself begin it, and this decision calmed her. And following with her eyes the doctor's well-built figure, she said, as though trying to soften the crudity of her decision:

"He's a nice man. . . . We shall get through life somehow."

She returned home. While she was dressing, Auntie Dasha came into the room, and said:

"Alyona upset you, darling; I've sent her home to the village. Her mother's given her a good beating and has come here, crying."

"Auntie," said Vera quickly, "I'm going to marry Dr. Neshtchapov. Only talk to him yourself . . . I can't."

And again she went out into the fields. And wandering aimlessly about, she made up her mind that when she was married she would look after the house, doctor the peasants, teach in the school, that she would do all the things that other women of her circle did. And this perpetual dissatisfaction with herself and every one else, this series of crude mistakes which stand up like a mountain before one whenever one looks back upon one's past, she would accept as her real life to which she was fated, and she would expect nothing better. . . . Of course there was nothing better! Beautiful nature, dreams, music, told one story, but reality another. Evidently truth and happiness existed somewhere outside real life. . . . One must give up one's own life and merge oneself into this luxuriant steppe, boundless and indifferent as eternity, with its flowers, its ancient barrows, and its distant horizon, and then it would be well with one. . . .

A month later Vera was living at the works.

THE PRINCESS

A CARRIAGE with four fine sleek horses drove in at the big so-called Red Gate of the N—— Monastery. While it was still at a distance, the priests and monks who were standing in a group round the part of the hostel allotted to the gentry, recognised by the coachman and horses that the lady in the carriage was Princess Vera Gavrilovna, whom they knew very well.

An old man in livery jumped off the box and helped the princess to get out of the carriage. She raised her dark veil and moved in a leisurely way up to the priests to receive their blessing; then she nodded pleasantly to the rest of the monks and went into the hostel.

"Well, have you missed your princess?" she said to the monk who brought in her things. "It's a whole month since I've been to see you. But here I am; behold your princess. And where is the Father Superior? My goodness, I am burning with impatience! Wonderful, wonderful old man! You must be proud of having such a Superior."

When the Father Superior came in, the princess uttered a shriek of delight, crossed her arms over her bosom, and went up to receive his blessing.

"No, no, let me kiss your hand," she said, snatching it and eagerly kissing it three times. "How glad I am to see you at last, holy Father! I'm sure you've forgotten your princess, but my thoughts have been in your dear monastery every moment. How delightful it is here! This living for God far from the busy, giddy world has a special charm of its own, holy Father, which I feel with my whole soul although I cannot express it!"

The princess's cheeks glowed and tears came into her eyes.

She talked incessantly, fervently, while the Father Superior, a grave, plain, shy old man of seventy, remained mute or uttered abruptly, like a soldier on duty, phrases such as:

"Certainly, Your Excellency. . . . Quite so. I understand."

"Has Your Excellency come for a long stay?" he inquired.

"I shall stay the night here, and to-morrow I'm going on to Klavdia Nikolaevna's—it's a long time since I've seen her—and the day after to-morrow I'll come back to you and stay three or four days. I want to rest my soul here among you, holy Father. . . ."

The princess liked being at the monastery at N——. For the last two years it had been a favourite resort of hers; she used to go there almost every month in the summer and stay two or three days, even sometimes a week. The shy novices, the stillness, the low ceilings, the smell of cypress, the modest fare, the cheap curtains on the windows—all this touched her, softened her, and disposed her to contemplation and good thoughts. It was enough for her to be half an hour in the hostel for her to feel that she, too, was timid and modest, and that she, too, smelt of cypress-wood. The past retreated into the background, lost its significance, and the princess began to imagine that in spite of her twenty-nine years she was very much like the old Father Superior, and that, like him, she was created not for wealth, not for earthly grandeur and love, but for a peaceful life secluded from the world, a life in twilight like the hostel.

It happens that a ray of light gleams in the dark cell of the anchorite absorbed in prayer, or a bird alights on the window and sings its song; the stern anchorite will smile in spite of himself, and a gentle, sinless joy will pierce through the load of grief over his sins, like water flowing from under a stone. The princess fancied she brought from the outside world just such comfort as the ray of light or the bird. Her gay, friendly smile, her gentle eyes, her voice, her jests, her whole personality in fact, her little graceful figure always dressed in simple black, must arouse in simple, austere people

a feeling of tenderness and joy. Every one, looking at her, must think: "God has sent us an angel. . . ." And feeling that no one could help thinking this, she smiled still more cordially, and tried to look like a bird.

After drinking tea and resting, she went for a walk. The sun was already setting. From the monastery garden came a moist fragrance of freshly watered mignonette, and from the church floated the soft singing of men's voices, which seemed very pleasant and mournful in the distance. It was the evening service. In the dark windows where the little lamps glowed gently, in the shadows, in the figure of the old monk sitting at the church door with a collecting-box, there was such unruffled peace that the princess felt moved to tears.

Outside the gate, in the walk between the wall and the birch-trees where there were benches, it was quite evening. The air grew rapidly darker and darker. The princess went along the walk, sat on a seat, and sank into thought.

She thought how good it would be to settle down for her whole life in this monastery where life was as still and unruffled as a summer evening; how good it would be to forget the ungrateful dissipated prince; to forget her immense estates, the creditors who worried her every day, her misfortunes, her maid Dasha, who had looked at her impertinently that morning. It would be nice to sit here on the bench all her life and watch through the trunks of the birch-trees the evening mist gathering in wreaths in the valley below; the rooks flying home in a black cloud like a veil far, far away above the forest; two novices, one astride a piebald horse, another on foot driving out the horses for the night and rejoicing in their freedom, playing pranks like little children; their youthful voices rang out musically in the still air, and she could distinguish every word. It is nice to sit and listen to the silence: at one moment the wind blows and stirs the tops of the birch-trees, then a frog rustles in last year's leaves, then the clock of the belfry strikes the quarter. . . . One might sit without moving, listen and think, and think. . . .

An old woman passed by with a wallet on her back. The princess thought that it would be nice to stop the old woman and to say something friendly and cordial to her, to help her. . . . But the old woman turned the corner without once looking round.

Not long afterwards a tall man with a grey beard and a straw hat came along the walk. When he came up to the princess, he took off his hat and bowed. From the bald patch on his head and his sharp, hooked nose the princess recognized him as the doctor, Mihail Ivanovitch, who had been in her service at Dubovki. She remembered that some one had told her that his wife had died the year before, and she wanted to sympathise with him, to console him.

"Doctor, I expect you don't recognise me?" she said with an affable smile.

"Yes, Princess, I recognise you," said the doctor, taking off his hat again.

"Oh, thank you; I was afraid that you, too, had forgotten your princess. People only remember their enemies, but they forget their friends. Have you, too, come to pray?"

"I am the doctor here, and I have to spend the night at the monastery every Saturday."

"Well, how are you?" said the princess, sighing. "I hear that you have lost your wife. What a calamity!"

"Yes, Princess, for me it is a great calamity."

"There's nothing for it! We must bear our troubles with resignation. Not one hair of a man's head is lost without the Divine Will."

"Yes, Princess."

To the princess's friendly, gentle smile and her sighs the doctor responded coldly and dryly: "Yes, Princess." And the expression of his face was cold and dry.

"What else can I say to him?" she wondered.

"How long is it since we met?" she said. "Five years! How much water has flowed under the bridge, how many changes in that time; it quite frightens one to think of it! You know, I am married. . . . I am not a countess now, but

a princess. And by now I am separated from my husband too."

"Yes, I heard so."

"God has sent me many trials. No doubt you have heard, too, that I am almost ruined. My Dubovki, Sofyino, and Kiryakovo have all been sold for my unhappy husband's debts. And I have only Baranovo and Mihaltsevo left. It's terrible to look back: how many changes and misfortunes of all kinds, how many mistakes!"

"Yes, Princess, many mistakes."

The princess was a little disconcerted. She knew her mistakes; they were all of such a private character that no one but she could think or speak of them. She could not resist asking:

"What mistakes are you thinking about?"

"You referred to them, so you know them . . ." answered the doctor, and he smiled. "Why talk about them!"

"No; tell me, doctor. I shall be very grateful to you. And please don't stand on ceremony with me. I love to hear the truth."

"I am not your judge, Princess."

"Not my judge! What a tone you take! You must know something about me. Tell me!"

"If you really wish it, very well. Only I regret to say I'm not clever at talking, and people can't always understand me."

The doctor thought a moment and began:

"A lot of mistakes; but the most important of them, in my opinion, was the general spirit that prevailed on all your estates. You see, I don't know how to express myself. I mean chiefly the lack of love, the aversion for people that was felt in absolutely everything. Your whole system of life was built upon that aversion. Aversion for the human voice, for faces, for heads, steps . . . in fact, for everything that makes up a human being. At all the doors and on the stairs there stand sleek, rude, and lazy grooms in livery to prevent badly dressed persons from entering the house; in the hall

there are chairs with high backs so that the footmen waiting there, during balls and receptions, may not soil the walls with their heads; in every room there are thick carpets that no human step may be heard; every one who comes in is infallibly warned to speak as softly and as little as possible, and to say nothing that might have a disagreeable effect on the nerves or the imagination. And in your room you don't shake hands with any one or ask him to sit down—just as you didn't shake hands with me or ask me to sit down. . . ."

"By all means, if you like," said the princess, smiling and holding out her hand. "Really, to be cross about such trifles. . . ."

"But I am not cross," laughed the doctor, but at once he flushed, took off his hat, and waving it about, began hotly: "To be candid, I've long wanted an opportunity to tell you all I think. . . . That is, I want to tell you that you look upon the mass of mankind from the Napoleonic standpoint as food for the cannon. But Napoleon had at least some idea; you have nothing except aversion."

"I have an aversion for people?" smiled the princess, shrugging her shoulders in astonishment. "I have!"

"Yes, you! You want facts? By all means. In Mihaltsevo three former cooks of yours, who have gone blind in your kitchen from the heat of the stove, are living upon charity. All the health and strength and good looks that is found on your hundreds of thousands of acres is taken by you and your parasites for your grooms, your footmen, and your coachmen. All these two-legged cattle are trained to be flunkeys, overeat themselves, grow coarse, lose the 'image and likeness,' in fact. . . . Young doctors, agricultural experts, teachers, intellectual workers generally—think of it!—are torn away from their honest work and forced for a crust of bread to take part in all sorts of mummeries which make every decent man feel ashamed! Some young men cannot be in your service for three years without becoming hypocrites, toadies, sneaks. . . . Is that a good thing? Your Polish superintendents, those abject spies, all those Kazimers and Kaetans, go hunting about

on your hundreds of thousands of acres from morning to night, and to please you try to get three skins off one ox. Excuse me, I speak disconnectedly, but that doesn't matter. You don't look upon the simple people as human beings. And even the princes, counts, and bishops who used to come and see you, you looked upon simply as decorative figures, not as living beings. But the worst of all, the thing that most revolts me, is having a fortune of over a million and doing nothing for other people, nothing!"

The princess sat amazed, aghast, offended, not knowing what to say or how to behave. She had never before been spoken to in such a tone. The doctor's unpleasant, angry voice and his clumsy, faltering phrases made a harsh clattering noise in her ears and her head. Then she began to feel as though the gesticulating doctor was hitting her on the head with his hat.

"It's not true!" she articulated softly, in an imploring voice. "I've done a great deal of good for other people; you know it yourself!"

"Nonsense!" cried the doctor. "Can you possibly go on thinking of your philanthropic work as something genuine and useful, and not a mere mummery? It was a farce from beginning to end; it was playing at loving your neighbour, the most open farce which even children and stupid peasant women saw through! Take for instance your—what was it called—house for homeless old women without relations, of which you made me something like a head doctor, and of which you were the patroness. Mercy on us! What a charming institution it was! A house was built with parquet floors and a weather-cock on the roof; a dozen old women were collected from the villages and made to sleep under blankets and sheets of Dutch linen, and given toffee to eat."

The doctor gave a malignant chuckle into his hat, and went on speaking rapidly and stammering:

"It was a farce! The attendants kept the sheets and the blankets under lock and key, for fear the old women should soil them—'Let the old devil's pepper-pots sleep on the floor.'

The old women did not dare to sit down on the beds, to put on their jackets, to walk over the polished floors. Everything was kept for show and hidden away from the old women as though they were thieves, and the old women were clothed and fed on the sly by other people's charity, and prayed to God night and day to be released from their prison and from the canting exhortations of the sleek rascals to whose care you committed them. And what did the managers do? It was simply charming! About twice a week there would be thirty-five thousand messages to say that the princess —that is, you—were coming to the home next day. That meant that next day I had to abandon my patients, dress up and be on parade. Very good; I arrive. The old women, in everything clean and new, are already drawn up in a row, waiting. Near them struts the old garrison rat—the superintendent with his mawkish, sneaking smile. The old women yawn and exchange glances, but are afraid to complain. We wait. The junior steward gallops up. Half an hour later the senior steward; then the superintendent of the accounts' office, then another, and then another of them . . . they keep arriving endlessly. They all have mysterious, solemn faces. We wait and wait, shift from one leg to another, look at the clock—all this in monumental silence because we all hate each other like poison. One hour passes, then a second, and then at last the carriage is seen in the distance, and . . . and . . ."

The doctor went off into a shrill laugh and brought out in a shrill voice:

"You get out of the carriage, and the old hags, at the word of command from the old garrison rat, begin chanting: 'The Glory of our Lord in Zion the tongue of man cannot express. . . .' A pretty scene, wasn't it?"

The doctor went off into a bass chuckle, and waved his hand as though to signify that he could not utter another word for laughing. He laughed heavily, harshly, with clenched teeth, as ill-natured people laugh; and from his voice, from his face, from his glittering, rather insolent eyes it could be

seen that he had a profound contempt for the princess, for the home, and for the old women. There was nothing amusing or laughable in all that he described so clumsily and coarsely, but he laughed with satisfaction, even with delight.

"And the school?" he went on, panting from laughter. "Do you remember how you wanted to teach peasant children yourself? You must have taught them very well, for very soon the children all ran away, so that they had to be thrashed and bribed to come and be taught. And you remember how you wanted to feed with your own hands the infants whose mothers were working in the fields. You went about the village crying because the infants were not at your disposal, as the mothers would take them to the fields with them. Then the village foreman ordered the mothers by turns to leave their infants behind for your entertainment. A strange thing! They all ran away from your benevolence like mice from a cat! And why was it? It's very simple. Not because our people are ignorant and ungrateful, as you always explained it to yourself, but because in all your fads, if you'll excuse the word, there wasn't a ha'p'orth of love and kindness! There was nothing but the desire to amuse yourself with living puppets, nothing else. . . . A person who does not feel the difference between a human being and a lap-dog ought not to go in for philanthropy. I assure you, there's a great difference between human beings and lap-dogs!"

The princess's heart was beating dreadfully; there was a thudding in her ears, and she still felt as though the doctor were beating her on the head with his hat. The doctor talked quickly, excitedly, and uncouthly, stammering and gesticulating unnecessarily. All she grasped was that she was spoken to by a coarse, ill-bred, spiteful, and ungrateful man; but what he wanted of her and what he was talking about, she could not understand.

"Go away!" she said in a tearful voice, putting up her hands to protect her head from the doctor's hat; "go away!"

"And how you treat your servants!" the doctor went on, indignantly. "You treat them as the lowest scoundrels, and

don't look upon them as human beings. For example, allow me to ask, why did you dismiss me? For ten years I worked for your father and afterwards for you, honestly, without vacations or holidays. I gained the love of all for more than seventy miles round, and suddenly one fine day I am informed that I am no longer wanted. What for? I've no idea to this day. I, a doctor of medicine, a gentleman by birth, a student of the Moscow University, father of a family—am such a petty, insignificant insect that you can kick me out without explaining the reason! Why stand on ceremony with me! I heard afterwards that my wife went without my knowledge three times to intercede with you for me—you wouldn't receive her. I am told she cried in your hall. And I shall never forgive her for it, never!"

The doctor paused and clenched his teeth, making an intense effort to think of something more to say, very unpleasant and vindictive. He thought of something, and his cold, frowning face suddenly brightened.

"Take your attitude to this monastery!" he said with avidity. "You've never spared any one, and the holier the place, the more chance of its suffering from your loving-kindness and angelic sweetness. Why do you come here? What do you want with the monks here, allow me to ask you? What is Hecuba to you or you to Hecuba? It's another farce, another amusement for you, another sacrilege against human dignity, and nothing more. Why, you don't believe in the monks' God; you've a God of your own in your heart, whom you've evolved for yourself at spiritualist séances. You look with condescension upon the ritual of the Church; you don't go to mass or vespers; you sleep till midday. . . . Why do you come here? . . . You come with a God of your own into a monastery you have nothing to do with, and you imagine that the monks look upon it as a very great honour. To be sure they do! You'd better ask, by the way, what your visits cost the monastery. You were graciously pleased to arrive here this evening, and a messenger from your estate arrived on horseback the day before yesterday to warn them of your

coming. They were the whole day yesterday getting the rooms ready and expecting you. This morning your advance-guard arrived—an insolent maid, who keeps running across the courtyard, rustling her skirts, pestering them with questions, giving orders. . . . I can't endure it! The monks have been on the lookout all day, for if you were not met with due ceremony, there would be trouble! You'd complain to the bishop! 'The monks don't like me, your holiness; I don't know what I've done to displease them. It's true I'm a great sinner, but I'm so unhappy!' Already one monastery has been in hot water over you. The Father Superior is a busy, learned man; he hasn't a free moment, and you keep sending for him to come to your rooms. Not a trace of respect for age or for rank! If at least you were a bountiful giver to the monastery, one wouldn't resent it so much, but all this time the monks have not received a hundred roubles from you!"

Whenever people worried the princess, misunderstood her, or mortified her, and when she did not know what to say or do, she usually began to cry. And on this occasion, too, she ended by hiding her face in her hands and crying aloud in a thin treble like a child. The doctor suddenly stopped and looked at her. His face darkened and grew stern.

"Forgive me, Princess," he said in a hollow voice. "I've given way to a malicious feeling and forgotten myself. It was not right."

And coughing in an embarrassed way, he walked away quickly, without remembering to put his hat on.

Stars were already twinkling in the sky. The moon must have been rising on the further side of the monastery, for the sky was clear, soft, and transparent. Bats were flitting noiselessly along the white monastery wall.

The clock slowly struck three quarters, probably a quarter to nine. The princess got up and walked slowly to the gate. She felt wounded and was crying, and she felt that the trees and the stars and even the bats were pitying her, and that the clock struck musically only to express its sympathy with her. She cried and thought how nice it would be to go into

a monastery for the rest of her life. On still summer evenings she would walk alone through the avenues, insulted, injured, misunderstood by people, and only God and the starry heavens would see the martyr's tears. The evening service was still going on in the church. The princess stopped and listened to the singing; how beautiful the singing sounded in the still darkness! How sweet to weep and suffer to the sound of that singing!

Going into her rooms, she looked at her tear-stained face in the glass and powdered it, then she sat down to supper. The monks knew that she liked pickled sturgeon, little mushrooms, Malaga and plain honey-cakes that left a taste of cypress in the mouth, and every time she came they gave her all these dishes. As she ate the mushrooms and drank the Malaga, the princess dreamed of how she would be finally ruined and deserted—how all her stewards, bailiffs, clerks, and maid-servants for whom she had done so much, would be false to her, and begin to say rude things; how people all the world over would set upon her, speak ill of her, jeer at her. She would renounce her title, would renounce society and luxury, and would go into a convent without one word of reproach to any one; she would pray for her enemies—and then they would all understand her and come to beg her forgiveness, but by that time it would be too late. . . .

After supper she knelt down in the corner before the ikon and read two chapters of the Gospel. Then her maid made her bed and she got into it. Stretching herself under the white quilt, she heaved a sweet, deep sigh, as one sighs after crying, closed her eyes, and began to fall asleep.

In the morning she waked up and glanced at her watch. It was half-past nine. On the carpet near the bed was a bright, narrow streak of sunlight from a ray which came in at the window and dimly lighted up the room. Flies were buzzing behind the black curtain at the window. "It's early," thought the princess, and she closed her eyes.

Stretching and lying snug in her bed, she recalled her meeting yesterday with the doctor and all the thoughts with which

she had gone to sleep the night before: she remembered she was unhappy. Then she thought of her husband living in Petersburg, her stewards, doctors, neighbours, the officials of her acquaintance . . . a long procession of familiar masculine faces passed before her imagination. She smiled and thought, if only these people could see into her heart and understand her, they would all be at her feet.

At a quarter past eleven she called her maid.

"Help me to dress, Dasha," she said languidly. "But go first and tell them to get out the horses. I must set off for Klavdia Nikolaevna's."

Going out to get into the carriage, she blinked at the glaring daylight and laughed with pleasure: It was a wonderfully fine day! As she scanned from her half-closed eyes the monks who had gathered round the steps to see her off, she nodded graciously and said:

"Good-bye, my friends! Till the day after to-morrow."

It was an agreeable surprise to her that the doctor was with the monks by the steps. His face was pale and severe.

"Princess," he said with a guilty smile, taking off his hat, "I've been waiting here a long time to see you. Forgive me, for God's sake. . . . I was carried away yesterday by an evil, vindictive feeling and I talked . . . nonsense. In short, I beg your pardon."

The princess smiled graciously, and held out her hand for him to kiss. He kissed it, turning red.

Trying to look like a bird, the princess fluttered into the carriage and nodded in all directions. There was a gay, warm, serene feeling in her heart, and she felt herself that her smile was particularly soft and friendly. As the carriage rolled towards the gates, and afterwards along the dusty road past huts and gardens, past long trains of waggons and strings of pilgrims on their way to the monastery, she still screwed up her eyes and smiled softly. She was thinking there was no higher bliss than to bring warmth, light, and joy wherever one went, to forgive injuries, to smile graciously on one's enemies. The peasants she passed bowed to her, the carriage

rustled softly, clouds of dust rose from under the wheels and floated over the golden rye, and it seemed to the princess that her body was swaying not on carriage cushions but on clouds, and that she herself was like a light, transparent little cloud. . . .

"How happy I am!" she murmured, shutting her eyes. "How happy I am!"

A NIGHTMARE

KUNIN, a young man of thirty, who was a permanent member of the Rural Board, on returning from Petersburg to his district, Borisovo, immediately sent a mounted messenger to Sinkino, for the priest there, Father Yakov Smirnov.

Five hours later Father Yakov appeared.

"Very glad to make your acquaintance," said Kunin, meeting him in the entry. "I've been living and serving here for a year; it seems as though we ought to have been acquainted before. You are very welcome! But . . . how young you are!" Kunin added in surprise. "What is your age?"

"Twenty-eight, . . ." said Father Yakov, faintly pressing Kunin's outstretched hand, and for some reason turning crimson.

Kunin led his visitor into his study and began looking at him more attentively.

"What an uncouth womanish face!" he thought.

There certainly was a good deal that was womanish in Father Yakov's face: the turned-up nose, the bright red cheeks, and the large grey-blue eyes with scanty, scarcely perceptible eye-brows. His long reddish hair, smooth and dry, hung down in straight tails on to his shoulders. The hair on his upper lip was only just beginning to form into a real masculine moustache, while his little beard belonged to that class of good-for-nothing beards which among divinity students are for some reason called "ticklers." It was scanty and extremely transparent; it could not have been stroked or combed, it could only have been pinched. . . . All these scanty decorations were put on unevenly in tufts, as though Father Yakov, thinking to dress up as a priest and beginning to gum on the beard, had been interrupted halfway through.

He had on a cassock, the colour of weak coffee with chicory in it, with big patches on both elbows.

"A queer type," thought Kunin, looking at his muddy skirts. "Comes to the house for the first time and can't dress decently.

"Sit down, Father," he began more carelessly than cordially, as he moved an easy-chair to the table. "Sit down, I beg you."

Father Yakov coughed into his fist, sank awkwardly on to the edge of the chair, and laid his open hands on his knees. With his short figure, his narrow chest, his red and perspiring face, he made from the first moment a most unpleasant impression on Kunin. The latter could never have imagined that there were such undignified and pitiful-looking priests in Russia; and in Father Yakov's attitude, in the way he held his hands on his knees and sat on the very edge of his chair, he saw a lack of dignity and even a shade of servility.

"I have invited you on business, Father. . . ." Kunin began, sinking back in his low chair. "It has fallen to my lot to perform the agreeable duty of helping you in one of your useful undertakings. . . . On coming back from Petersburg, I found on my table a letter from the Marshal of Nobility. Yegor Dmitrevitch suggests that I should take under my supervision the church parish school which is being opened in Sinkino. I shall be very glad to, Father, with all my heart. . . . More than that, I accept the proposition with enthusiasm."

Kunin got up and walked about the study.

"Of course, both Yegor Dmitrevitch and probably you, too, are aware that I have not great funds at my disposal. My estate is mortgaged, and I live exclusively on my salary as the permanent member. So that you cannot reckon on very much assistance, but I will do all that is in my power. . . . And when are you thinking of opening the school, Father?"

"When we have the money, . . ." answered Father Yakov.

"You have some funds at your disposal already?"

"Scarcely any. . . . The peasants settled at their meeting

that they would pay, every man of them, thirty kopecks a year; but that's only a promise, you know! And for the first beginning we should need at least two hundred roubles. . . ."

"M'yes. . . . Unhappily, I have not that sum now," said Kunin with a sigh. "I spent all I had on my tour and got into debt, too. Let us try and think of some plan together."

Kunin began planning aloud. He explained his views and watched Father Yakov's face, seeking signs of agreement or approval in it. But the face was apathetic and immobile, and expressed nothing but constrained shyness and uneasiness. Looking at it, one might have supposed that Kunin was talking of matters so abstruse that Father Yakov did not understand and only listened from good manners, and was at the same time afraid of being detected in his failure to understand.

"The fellow is not one of the brightest, that's evident . . ." thought Kunin. "He's rather shy and much too stupid."

Father Yakov revived somewhat and even smiled only when the footman came into the study bringing in two glasses of tea on a tray and a cake-basket full of biscuits. He took his glass and began drinking at once.

"Shouldn't we write to the bishop?" Kunin went on, meditating aloud. "To be precise, you know, it is not we, not the Zemstvo, but the higher ecclesiastical authorities, who have raised the question of the church parish schools. They ought really to apportion the funds. I remember I read that a sum of money had been set aside for the purpose. Do you know nothing about it?"

Father Yakov was so absorbed in drinking tea that he did not answer this question at once. He lifted his grey-blue eyes to Kunin, thought a moment, and as though recalling his question, he shook his head in the negative. An expression of pleasure and of the most ordinary prosaic appetite overspread his face from ear to ear. He drank and smacked his lips over every gulp. When he had drunk it to the very last drop, he put his glass on the table, then took his glass back again, looked at the bottom of it, then put it back again. The expression of

pleasure faded from his face. . . . Then Kunin saw his visitor take a biscuit from the cake-basket, nibble a little bit off it, then turn it over in his hand and hurriedly stick it in his pocket.

"Well, that's not at all clerical!" thought Kunin, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously. "What is it, priestly greed or childishness?"

After giving his visitor another glass of tea and seeing him to the entry, Kunin lay down on the sofa and abandoned himself to the unpleasant feeling induced in him by the visit of Father Yakov.

"What a strange wild creature!" he thought. "Dirty, untidy, coarse, stupid, and probably he drinks. . . . My God, and that's a priest, a spiritual father! That's a teacher of the people! I can fancy the irony there must be in the deacon's face when before every mass he booms out: 'Thy blessing, Reverend Father!' A fine reverend Father! A reverend Father without a grain of dignity or breeding, hiding biscuits in his pocket like a schoolboy. . . . Fie! Good Lord, where were the bishop's eyes when he ordained a man like that? What can he think of the people if he gives them a teacher like that? One wants people here who . . ."

And Kunin thought what Russian priests ought to be like.

"If I were a priest, for instance. . . . An educated priest fond of his work might do a great deal. . . . I should have had the school opened long ago. And the sermons? If the priest is sincere and is inspired by love for his work, what wonderful rousing sermons he might give!"

Kunin shut his eyes and began mentally composing a sermon. A little later he sat down to the table and rapidly began writing.

"I'll give it to that red-haired fellow; let him read it in church, . . ." he thought.

The following Sunday Kunin drove over to Sinkino in the morning to settle the question of the school, and while he was there to make acquaintance with the church of which he was a parishioner. In spite of the awful state of the roads, it

was a glorious morning. The sun was shining brightly and cleaving with its rays the layers of white snow still lingering here and there. The snow as it took leave of the earth glittered with such diamonds that it hurt the eyes to look, while the young winter corn was hastily thrusting up its green beside it. The rooks floated with dignity over the fields. A rook would fly, drop to earth, and give several hops before standing firmly on its feet. . . .

The wooden church up to which Kunin drove was old and grey; the columns of the porch had once been painted white, but the colour had now completely peeled off, and they looked like two ungainly shafts. The ikon over the door looked like a dark smudged blur. But its poverty touched and softened Kunin. Modestly dropping his eyes, he went into the church and stood by the door. The service had only just begun. An old sacristan, bent into a bow, was reading the "Hours" in a hollow indistinct tenor. Father Yakov, who conducted the service without a deacon, was walking about the church, burning incense. Had it not been for the softened mood in which Kunin found himself on entering the poverty-stricken church, he certainly would have smiled at the sight of Father Yakov. The short priest was wearing a crumpled and extremely long robe of some shabby yellow material; the hem of the robe trailed on the ground.

The church was not full. Looking at the parishioners, Kunin was struck at the first glance by one strange circumstance: he saw nothing but old people and children. . . . Where were the men of working age? Where was the youth and manhood? But after he had stood there a little and looked more attentively at the aged-looking faces, Kunin saw that he had mistaken young people for old. He did not, however, attach any significance to this little optical illusion.

The church was as cold and grey inside as outside. There was not one spot on the ikons nor on the dark brown walls which was not begrimed and defaced by time. There were many windows, but the general effect of colour was grey, and so it was twilight in the church.

"Anyone pure in soul can pray here very well," thought Kunin. "Just as in St. Peter's in Rome one is impressed by grandeur, here one is touched by the lowliness and simplicity."

But his devout mood vanished like smoke as soon as Father Yakov went up to the altar and began mass. Being still young and having come straight from the seminary bench to the priesthood, Father Yakov had not yet formed a set manner of celebrating the service. As he read he seemed to be vacillating between a high tenor and a thin bass; he bowed clumsily, walked quickly, and opened and shut the gates abruptly. . . . The old sacristan, evidently deaf and ailing, did not hear the prayers very distinctly, and this very often led to slight misunderstandings. Before Father Yakov had time to finish what he had to say, the sacristan began chanting his response, or else long after Father Yakov had finished the old man would be straining his ears, listening in the direction of the altar and saying nothing till his skirt was pulled. The old man had a sickly hollow voice and an asthmatic quavering lisp. . . . The complete lack of dignity and decorum was emphasized by a very small boy who seconded the sacristan and whose head was hardly visible over the railing of the choir. The boy sang in a shrill falsetto and seemed to be trying to avoid singing in tune. Kunin stayed a little while, listened and went out for a smoke. He was disappointed, and looked at the grey church almost with dislike.

"They complain of the decline of religious feeling among the people, . . ." he sighed. "I should rather think so! They'd better foist a few more priests like this one on them!"

Kunin went back into the church three times, and each time he felt a great temptation to get out into the open air again. Waiting till the end of the mass, he went to Father Yakov's. The priest's house did not differ outwardly from the peasants' huts, but the thatch lay more smoothly on the roof and there were little white curtains in the windows. Father Yakov led Kunin into a light little room with a clay floor and walls covered with cheap paper; in spite of some painful efforts towards luxury in the way of photographs in frames, and a

clock with a pair of scissors hanging on the weight, the furnishing of the room impressed him by its scantiness. Looking at the furniture, one might have supposed that Father Yakov had gone from house to house and collected it in bits; in one place they had given him a round three-legged table, in another a stool, in a third a chair with a back bent violently backwards; in a fourth a chair with an upright back, but the seat smashed in; while in a fifth they had been liberal and given him a semblance of a sofa with a flat back and a lattice-work seat. This semblance had been painted dark red and smelt strongly of paint. Kunin meant at first to sit down on one of the chairs, but on second thought he sat down on the stool.

"This is the first time you have been to our church?" asked Father Yakov, hanging his hat on a huge misshapen nail.

"Yes, it is. I tell you what, Father, before we begin on business, will you give me some tea? My soul is parched."

Father Yakov blinked, gasped, and went behind the partition wall. There was a sound of whispering.

"With his wife, I suppose," thought Kunin; "it would be interesting to see what the red-headed fellow's wife is like."

A little later Father Yakov came back, red and perspiring, and with an effort to smile, sat down on the edge of the sofa.

"They will heat the samovar directly," he said, without looking at his visitor.

"My goodness, they have not heated the samovar yet!" Kunin thought with horror. "A nice time we shall have to wait."

"I have brought you," he said, "the rough draft of the letter I have written to the bishop. I'll read it after tea; perhaps you may find something to add. . . ."

"Very well."

A silence followed. Father Yakov threw furtive glances at the partition wall, smoothed his hair, and blew his nose.

"It's wonderful weather, . . ." he said.

"Yes. I read an interesting thing yesterday, . . . the Volsky Zemstvo have decided to give their schools to the clergy, that's typical."

Kunin got up, and pacing up and down the clay floor, began to give expression to his reflections.

"That would be all right," he said, "if only the clergy were equal to their high calling and recognized their tasks. I am so unfortunate as to know priests whose standard of culture and whose moral qualities make them hardly fit to be army secretaries, much less priests. You will agree that a bad teacher does far less harm than a bad priest."

Kunin glanced at Father Yakov; he was sitting bent up, thinking intently about something and apparently not listening to his visitor.

"Yasha, come here!" a woman's voice called from behind the partition. Father Yakov started and went out. Again a whispering began.

Kunin felt a pang of longing for tea.

"No; it's no use my waiting for tea here," he thought, looking at his watch. "Besides, I fancy I am not altogether a welcome visitor. My host has not deigned to say one word to me; he simply sits and blinks."

Kunin took up his hat, waited for Father Yakov to return, and said good-bye to him.

"I have simply wasted the morning," he thought wrathfully on the way home. "The blockhead! The dummy! He cares no more about the school than I about last year's snow. . . . No, I shall never get anything done with him! We are bound to fail! If the Marshal knew what the priest here was like, he wouldn't be in such a hurry to talk about a school. We ought first to try and get a decent priest, and then think about the school."

By now Kunin almost hated Father Yakov. The man, his pitiful, grotesque figure in the long crumpled robe, his womanish face, his manner of officiating, his way of life and his formal restrained respectfulness, wounded the tiny relic of religious feeling which was stored away in a warm corner of

Kunin's heart together with his nurse's other fairy tales. The coldness and lack of attention with which Father Yakov had met Kunin's warm and sincere interest in what was the priest's own work was hard for the former's vanity to endure. . . .

On the evening of the same day Kunin spent a long time walking about his rooms and thinking. Then he sat down to the table resolutely and wrote a letter to the bishop. After asking for money and a blessing for the school, he set forth genuinely, like a son, his opinion of the priest at Sinkino. "He is young," he wrote, "insufficiently educated, leads, I fancy, an intemperate life, and altogether fails to satisfy the ideas which the Russian people have in the course of centuries formed of what a pastor should be."

After writing this letter Kunin heaved a deep sigh, and went to bed with the consciousness that he had done a good deed.

On Monday morning, while he was still in bed, he was informed that Father Yakov had arrived. He did not want to get up, and instructed the servant to say he was not at home. On Tuesday he went away to a sitting of the Board, and when he returned on Saturday he was told by the servants that Father Yakov had called every day in his absence.

"He liked my biscuits, it seems," he thought.

Towards evening on Sunday Father Yakov arrived. This time not only his skirts, but even his hat, was bespattered with mud. Just as on his first visit, he was hot and perspiring, and sat down on the edge of his chair as he had done then. Kunin determined not to talk about the school—not to cast pearls.

"I have brought you a list of books for the school, Pavel Mihailovitch, . . ." Father Yakov began.

"Thank you."

But everything showed that Father Yakov had come for something else besides the list. His whole figure was expressive of extreme embarrassment, and at the same time there was a look of determination upon his face, as on the face of a man suddenly inspired by an idea. He struggled to say something

important, absolutely necessary, and strove to overcome his timidity.

"Why is he dumb?" Kunin thought wrathfully. "He's settled himself comfortably! I haven't time to be bothered with him."

To smooth over the awkwardness of his silence and to conceal the struggle going on within him, the priest began to smile constrainedly, and this slow smile, wrung out on his red perspiring face, and out of keeping with the fixed look in his grey-blue eyes, made Kunin turn away. He felt moved to repulsion.

"Excuse me, Father, I have to go out," he said.

Father Yakov started like a man asleep who has been struck a blow, and, still smiling, began in his confusion wrapping round him the skirts of his cassock. In spite of his repulsion for the man, Kunin felt suddenly sorry for him, and he wanted to soften his cruelty.

"Please come another time, Father," he said, "and before we part I want to ask you a favour. I was somehow inspired to write two sermons the other day. . . . I will give them to you to look at. If they are suitable, use them."

"Very good," said Father Yakov, laying his open hand on Kunin's sermons which were lying on the table. "I will take them."

After standing a little, hesitating and still wrapping his cassock round him, he suddenly gave up the effort to smile and lifted his head resolutely.

"Pavel Mihailovitch," he said, evidently trying to speak loudly and distinctly.

"What can I do for you?"

"I have heard that you . . . er . . . have dismissed your secretary, and . . . and are looking for a new one. . . ."

"Yes, I am. . . . Why, have you someone to recommend?"

"I . . er . . . you see . . . I . . . Could you not give the post to me?"

"Why, are you giving up the Church?" said Kunin in amazement.

"No, no," Father Yakov brought out quickly, for some reason turning pale and trembling all over. "God forbid! If you feel doubtful, then never mind, never mind. You see, I could do the work between whiles, . . . so as to increase my income. . . . Never mind, don't disturb yourself!"

"H'm! . . . your income. . . . But you know, I only pay my secretary twenty roubles a month."

"Good heavens! I would take ten," whispered Father Yakov, looking about him. "Ten would be enough! You . . . you are astonished, and everyone is astonished. The greedy priest, the grasping priest, what does he do with his money? I feel myself I am greedy, . . . and I blame myself, I condemn myself. . . . I am ashamed to look people in the face. . . . I tell you on my conscience, Pavel Mihailovitch. . . . I call the God of truth to witness. . . ."

Father Yakov took breath and went on:

"On the way here I prepared a regular confession to make you, but . . . I've forgotten it all; I cannot find a word now. I get a hundred and fifty roubles a year from my parish, and everyone wonders what I do with the money. . . . But I'll explain it all truly. . . . I pay forty roubles a year to the clerical school for my brother Pyotr. He has everything found there, except that I have to provide pens and paper."

"Oh, I believe you; I believe you! But what's the object of all this?" said Kunin, with a wave of the hand, feeling terribly oppressed by this outburst of confidence on the part of his visitor, and not knowing how to get away from the tearful gleam in his eyes.

"Then I have not yet paid up all that I owe to the consistory for my place here. They charged me two hundred roubles for the living, and I was to pay ten roubles a month. . . . You can judge what is left! And, besides, I must allow Father Avraamy at least three roubles a month."

"What Father Avraamy?"

"Father Avraamy who was priest at Sinkino before I came.

He was deprived of the living on account of . . . his failing, but you know, he is still living at Sinkino! He has nowhere to go. There is no one to keep him. Though he is old, he must have a corner, and food and clothing. I can't let him go begging on the roads in his position! It would be on my conscience if anything happened! It would be my fault! He is . . . in debt all round; but, you see, I am to blame for not paying for him."

Father Yakov started up from his seat and, looking frantically at the floor, strode up and down the room.

"My God, my God!" he muttered, raising his hands and dropping them again. "Lord, save us and have mercy upon us! Why did you take such a calling on yourself if you have so little faith and no strength? There is no end to my despair! Save me, Queen of Heaven!"

"Calm yourself, Father," said Kunin.

"I am worn out with hunger, Pavel Mihailovitch," Father Yakov went on. "Generously forgive me, but I am at the end of my strength. . . . I know if I were to beg and to bow down, everyone would help, but . . . I cannot! I am ashamed. How can I beg of the peasants? You are on the Board here, so you know. . . . How can one beg of a beggar? And to beg of richer people, of landowners, I cannot! I have pride! I am ashamed!"

Father Yakov waved his hand, and nervously scratched his head with both hands.

"I am ashamed! My God, I am ashamed! I am proud and can't bear people to see my poverty! When you visited me, Pavel Mihailovitch, I had no tea in the house! There wasn't a pinch of it, and you know it was pride prevented me from telling you! I am ashamed of my clothes, of these patches here. . . . I am ashamed of my vestments, of being hungry. . . . And is it seemly for a priest to be proud?"

Father Yakov stood still in the middle of the study, and, as though he did not notice Kunin's presence, began reasoning with himself.

"Well, supposing I endure hunger and disgrace—but, my

God, I have a wife! I took her from a good home! She is not used to hard work; she is soft; she is used to tea and white bread and sheets on her bed. . . . At home she used to play the piano. . . . She is young, not twenty yet. . . . She would like, to be sure, to be smart, to have fun, go out to see people. . . . And she is worse off with me than any cook; she is ashamed to show herself in the street. My God, my God! Her only treat is when I bring an apple or some biscuit from a visit. . . ."

Father Yakov scratched his head again with both hands.

"And it makes us feel not love but pity for each other. . . . I cannot look at her without compassion! And the things that happen in this life, O Lord! Such things that people would not believe them if they saw them in the newspaper. . . . And when will there be an end to it all!"

"Hush, Father!" Kunin almost shouted, frightened at his tone. "Why take such a gloomy view of life?"

"Generously forgive me, Pavel Mihailovitch . . ." muttered Father Yakov as though he were drunk. "Forgive me, all this . . . doesn't matter, and don't take any notice of it. . . . Only I do blame myself, and always shall blame myself . . . always."

Father Yakov looked about him and began whispering:

"One morning early I was going from Sinkino to Lutchkovo; I saw a woman standing on the river bank, doing something. . . . I went up close and could not believe my eyes. . . . It was horrible! The wife of the doctor, Ivan Sergeitch, was sitting there washing her linen. . . . A doctor's wife, brought up at a select boarding-school! She had got up, you see, early and gone half a mile from the village that people should not see her. . . . She couldn't get over her pride! When she saw that I was near her and noticed her poverty, she turned red all over. . . . I was flustered—I was frightened, and ran up to help her, but she hid her linen from me; she was afraid I should see her ragged chemises. . . ."

"All this is positively incredible," said Kunin, sitting down and looking almost with horror at Father Yakov's pale face.

"Incredible it is! It's a thing that has never been, Pavel Mihailovitch, that a doctor's wife should be rinsing the linen in the river! Such a thing does not happen in any country! As her pastor and spiritual father, I ought not to allow it, but what can I do? What? Why, I am always trying to get treated by her husband for nothing myself! It is true that, as you say, it is all incredible! One can hardly believe one's eyes. During Mass, you know, when I look out from the altar and see my congregation, Avraamy starving, and my wife, and think of the doctor's wife—how blue her hands were from the cold water—would you believe it, I forget myself and stand senseless like a fool, until the sacristan calls to me. . . . It's awful!"

Father Yakov began walking about again.

"Lord Jesus!" he said, waving his hands, "holy Saints! I can't officiate properly. . . . Here you talk to me about the school, and I sit like a dummy and don't understand a word, and think of nothing but food. . . . Even before the altar. . . . But . . . what am I doing?" Father Yakov pulled himself up suddenly. "You want to go out. Forgive me, I meant nothing. . . . Excuse . . ."

Kunin shook hands with Father Yakov without speaking, saw him into the hall, and going back to his study, stood at the window. He saw Father Yakov go out of the house, pull his wide-brimmed rusty-looking hat over his eyes, and slowly, bowing his head, as though ashamed of his outburst, walk along the road.

"I don't see his horse," thought Kunin.

Kunin did not dare to think that the priest had come on foot every day to see him; it was five or six miles to Sinkino, and the mud on the road was impassable. Further on he saw the coachman Andrey and the boy Paramon, jumping over the puddles and splashing Father Yakov with mud, run up to him for his blessing. Father Yakov took off his hat and slowly blessed Andrey, then blessed the boy and stroked his head.

Kunin passed his hand over his eyes, and it seemed to him

that his hand was moist. He walked away from the window and with dim eyes looked round the room in which he still seemed to hear the timid droning voice. He glanced at the table. Luckily, Father Yakov, in his haste, had forgotten to take the sermons. Kunin rushed up to them, tore them into pieces, and with loathing thrust them under the table.

"And I did not know!" he moaned, sinking on to the sofa. "After being here over a year as member of the Rural Board, Honourary Justice of the Peace, member of the School Committee! Blind puppet, egregious idiot! I must make haste and help them, I must make haste!"

He turned from side to side uneasily, pressed his temples and racked his brains.

"On the twentieth I shall get my salary, two hundred roubles. . . . On some good pretext I will give him some, and some to the doctor's wife. . . . I will ask him to perform a special service here, and will get up an illness for the doctor. . . . In that way I shan't wound their pride. And I'll help Father Avraamy too. . . ."

He reckoned his money on his fingers, and was afraid to own to himself that those two hundred roubles would hardly be enough for him to pay his steward, his servants, the peasant who brought the meat. . . . He could not help remembering the recent past when he was senselessly squandering his father's fortune, when as a puppy of twenty he had given expensive fans to prostitutes, had paid ten roubles a day to Kuzma, his cab-driver, and in his vanity had made presents to actresses. Oh, how useful those wasted rouble, three rouble, ten rouble notes would have been now!

"Father Avraamy lives on three roubles a month!" thought Kunin. "For a rouble the priest's wife could get herself a chemise, and the doctor's wife could hire a washerwoman. But I'll help them, anyway! I must help them."

Here Kunin suddenly recalled the private information he had sent to the bishop, and he writhed as from a sudden draught of cold air. This remembrance filled him with over-

whelming shame before his inner self and before the unseen truth.

So had begun and had ended a sincere effort to be of public service on the part of a well-intentioned but unreflecting and over-comfortable person.

A SLANDER

Sergey Kapitonitch Ahineev, the writing-master, was marrying his daughter Natalya to the teacher of history and geography. The wedding festivities were going off most successfully. In the drawing-room there was singing, playing, and dancing. Waiters hired from the club were flitting distractedly about the rooms, dressed in black swallow-tails and dirty white ties. There was a continual hubbub and din of conversation. Sitting side by side on the sofa, the teacher of mathematics, Tarantulov, the French teacher, Pasdequoi, and the junior assessor of taxes, Mzda, were talking hurriedly and interrupting one another as they described to the guests cases of persons being buried alive, and gave their opinions on spiritualism. None of them believed in spiritualism, but all admitted that there were many things in this world which would always be beyond the mind of man. In the next room the literature master, Dodonsky, was explaining to the visitors the cases in which a sentry has the right to fire on passers-by. The subjects, as you perceive, were alarming, but very agreeable. Persons whose social position precluded them from entering were looking in at the windows from the yard.

Just at midnight the master of the house went into the kitchen to see whether everything was ready for supper. The kitchen from floor to ceiling was filled with fumes composed of goose, duck, and many other odours. On two tables the accessories, the drinks and light refreshments, were set out in artistic disorder. The cook, Marfa, a red-faced woman, whose figure was like a barrel with a belt round it, was bustling about the tables.

"Show me the sturgeon, Marfa," said Ahineev, rubbing his hands and licking his lips. "What a perfume, what a miasma!

I could eat up the whole kitchen. Come, show me the sturgeon."

Marfa went up to one of the benches and cautiously lifted a piece of greasy newspaper. Under the paper on an immense dish there reposed a huge sturgeon, masked in jelly and decorated with capers, olives, and carrots. Ahineev gazed at the sturgeon and gasped. His face beamed, he turned his eyes up. He bent down and with his lips emitted the sound of an ungreased wheel. After standing a moment he snapped his fingers with delight, and once more smacked his lips.

"Ah-ah! the sound of a passionate kiss. . . . Who is it you're kissing out there, little Marfa?" came a voice from the next room, and in the doorway there appeared the cropped head of the assistant usher Vankin. "Who is it? A-a-h! . . . Delighted to meet you! Sergey Kapitonitch! You're a fine grandfather, I must say! *Tête-à-tête* with the fair sex—tette!"

"I'm not kissing," said Ahineev in confusion. "Who told you so, you fool? I was only . . . I smacked my lips . . . in reference to . . . as an indication of . . . pleasure . . . at the sight of the fish."

"Tell that to the marines!" The intrusive face vanished, wearing a broad grin.

Ahineev flushed.

"Hang it!" he thought, "the beast will go now and talk scandal. He'll disgrace me to all the town, the brute."

Ahineev went timidly into the drawing-room and looked stealthily round for Vankin. Vankin was standing by the piano, and, bending down with a jaunty air, was whispering something to the inspector's sister-in-law, who was laughing.

"Talking about me!" thought Ahineev. "About me, blast him! And she believes it . . . believes it! She laughs! Mercy on us! No, I can't let it pass . . . I can't. I must do something to prevent his being believed. . . . I'll speak to them all, and he'll be shown up for a fool and a gossip."

Ahineev scratched his head, and still overcome with embarrassment, went up to Pasdequoi.

"I've just been in the kitchen to see after the supper," he said to the Frenchman. "I know you are fond of fish, and I've a sturgeon, my dear fellow, beyond everything! A yard and a half long! Ha, ha, ha! And, by the way . . . I was just forgetting. . . . In the kitchen just now, with that sturgeon . . . quite a little story! I went into the kitchen just now and wanted to look at the supper dishes. I looked at the sturgeon and I smacked my lips with relish . . . at the piquancy of it. And at the very moment that fool Vankin came in and said: . . . 'Ha, ha, ha! . . . So you're kissing here!' Kissing Marfa, the cook! What a thing to imagine, silly fool! The woman is a perfect fright, like all the beasts put together, and he talks about kissing! Queer fish!"

"Who's a queer fish?" asked Tarantulov, coming up.

"Why he, over there—Vankin! I went into the kitchen . . ."

And he told the story of Vankin. ". . . . He amused me, queer fish! I'd rather kiss a dog than Marfa, if you ask me," added Ahineev. He looked round and saw behind him Mzda.

"We are talking of Vankin," he said. "Queer fish, he is! He went into the kitchen, saw me beside Marfa, and began inventing all sorts of silly stories. 'Why are you kissing?' says he. He must have had a drop too much. 'And I'd rather kiss a turkeycock than Marfa,' I said. 'And I've a wife of my own, you fool,' said I. He did amuse me!"

"Who amused you?" asked the priest who taught Scripture in the school, going up to Ahineev.

"Vankin. I was standing in the kitchen, you know, looking at the sturgeon. . . ."

And so on. Within half an hour or so all the guests knew the incident of the sturgeon and Vankin.

"Let him tell away now!" thought Ahineev, rubbing his hands, "let him! He'll begin telling his story and they'll say to him at once, 'Enough of your nonsense, you fool, we know all about it!'"

And Ahineev was so relieved that in his joy he drank four

glasses too many. After escorting the young people to their room he went to bed and slept like an innocent babe, and next day he thought no more of the incident with the sturgeon. But, alas! man proposes, but God disposes. An evil tongue did its evil work, and Ahineev's strategy was of no avail. Just a week later—to be precise, on Wednesday after the third lesson —when Ahineev was standing in the middle of the teachers' room, holding forth on the vicious propensities of a boy called Visekin, the head master went up to him and drew him aside:

"Look here, Sergey Kapitonitch," said the head master, "you must excuse me. . . . It's not my business; but all the same I must make you realize. . . . It's my duty. You see, there are rumours that you are living with that . . . cook. . . . It's nothing to do with me, but . . . Live with her, kiss her . . . as you please, but don't let it be so public, please. I entreat you! Don't forget that you're a schoolmaster."

Ahineev turned cold and faint. He went home like a man stung by a whole swarm of bees, like a man scalded with boiling water. As he walked home, it seemed to him that the whole town was looking at him as though he were smeared with pitch. At home fresh trouble awaited him.

"Why aren't you gobbling up your food as usual?" his wife asked him at dinner. "What are you so pensive about? Brooding over your amours? Pining for your slut of a Marfa? I know all about it, Mahommedan! Kind friends have opened my eyes! O-o-o! . . . you savage!"

And she slapped him in the face. He got up from the table, not feeling the earth under his feet, and without his hat or his coat, made his way to Vankin. He found him at home.

"You scoundrel!" was how he addressed him. "Why have you covered me with mud before all the town? Why did you set this slander going about me?"

"What slander? What are you talking about?"

"Who was it gossiped of my kissing Marfa? Wasn't it you? Tell me that. Wasn't it you, you brigand?"

Vankin blinked and twitched in every fibre of his battered

countenance, raised his eyes to the ikon and articulated, "God blast me! Strike me blind and lay me out, if I said a single word about you! May I be left without house or home, may I be stricken with worse than cholera!"

Vankin's sincerity did not admit of doubt. It was evidently not he who was the author of the slander.

"But who, then, who?" Ahineev wondered, going over all his acquaintances in his mind and beating himself on the breast. "Who, then?"

Who, then? We, too, ask the reader.

A FATHER

"I ADMIT I have had a drop. . . . You must excuse me. I went into a beer shop on the way here, and as it was so hot had a couple of bottles. It's hot, my boy."

Old Musatov took a nondescript rag out of his pocket and wiped his shaven, battered face with it.

"I have come only for a minute, Borenka, my angel," he went on, not looking at his son, "about something very important. Excuse me, perhaps I am hindering you. Haven't you ten roubles, my dear, you could let me have till Tuesday? You see, I ought to have paid for my lodging yesterday, and money, you see! . . . None! Not to save my life!"

Young Musatov went out without a word, and began whispering the other side of the door with the landlady of the summer villa and his colleagues who had taken the villa with him. Three minutes later he came back, and without a word gave his father a ten-rouble note. The latter thrust it carelessly into his pocket without looking at it, and said:

"*Merci.* Well, how are you getting on? It's a long time since we met."

"Yes, a long time, not since Easter."

"Half a dozen times I have been meaning to come to you, but I've never had time. First one thing, then another. . . . It's simply awful! I am talking nonsense though. . . . All that's nonsense. Don't you believe me, Borenka. I said I would pay you back the ten roubles on Tuesday, don't believe that either. Don't believe a word I say. I have nothing to do at all, it's simply laziness, drunkenness, and I am ashamed to be seen in such clothes in the street. You must excuse me, Borenka. Here I have sent the girl to you three times for money and written you piteous letters. Thanks for the money,

but don't believe the letters; I was telling fibs. I am ashamed to rob you, my angel; I know that you can scarcely make both ends meet yourself, and feed on locusts, but my impudence is too much for me. I am such a specimen of impudence—fit for a show! . . . You must excuse me, Borenka. I tell you the truth, because I can't see your angel face without emotion."

A minute passed in silence. The old man heaved a deep sigh and said:

"You might treat me to a glass of beer perhaps."

His son went out without a word, and again there was a sound of whispering the other side of the door. When a little later the beer was brought in, the old man seemed to revive at the sight of the bottles and abruptly changed his tone.

"I was at the races the other day, my boy," he began telling him, assuming a scared expression. "We were a party of three, and we pooled three roubles on Frisky. And, thanks to that Frisky, we got thirty-two roubles each for our rouble. I can't get on without the races, my boy. It's a gentlemanly diversion. My virago always gives me a dressing over the races, but I go. I love it, and that's all about it."

Boris, a fair-haired young man with a melancholy immobile face, was walking slowly up and down, listening in silence. When the old man stopped to clear his throat, he went up to him and said:

"I bought myself a pair of boots the other day, father, which turn out to be too tight for me. Won't you take them? I'll let you have them cheap."

"If you like," said the old man with a grimace, "only for the price you gave for them, without any cheapening."

"Very well, I'll let you have them on credit."

The son groped under the bed and produced the new boots. The father took off his clumsy, rusty, evidently second-hand boots and began trying on the new ones.

"A perfect fit," he said. "Right, let me keep them. And on Tuesday, when I get my pension, I'll send you the money for them. That's not true, though," he went on, suddenly falling into the same tearful tone again. "And it was a lie

about the races, too, and a lie about the pension. And you are deceiving me, Borenka. . . . I feel your generous tactfulness. I see through you! Your boots were too small, because your heart is too big. Ah, Borenka, Borenka! I understand it all and feel it!"

"Have you moved into new lodgings?" his son interrupted, to change the conversation.

"Yes, my boy. I move every month. My virago can't stay long in the same place with her temper."

"I went to your lodgings, I meant to ask you to stay here with me. In your state of health it would do you good to be in the fresh air."

"No," said the old man, with a wave of his hand, "the woman wouldn't let me, and I shouldn't care to myself. A hundred times you have tried to drag me out of the pit, and I have tried myself, but nothing came of it. Give it up. I must stick in my filthy hole. This minute, here I am sitting, looking at your angel face, yet something is drawing me home to my hole. Such is my fate. You can't draw a dung-beetle to a rose. But it's time I was going, my boy. It's getting dark."

"Wait a minute then, I'll come with you. I have to go to town to-day myself."

Both put on their overcoats and went out. When a little while afterwards they were driving in a cab, it was already dark, and lights began to gleam in the windows.

"I've robbed you, Borenka!" the father muttered. "Poor children, poor children! It must be a dreadful trouble to have such a father! Borenka, my angel, I cannot lie when I see your face. You must excuse me. . . . What my depravity has come to, my God. Here I have just been robbing you, and put you to shame with my drunken state; I am robbing your brothers, too, and put them to shame, and you should have seen me yesterday! I won't conceal it, Borenka. Some neighbours, a wretched crew, came to see my virago; I got drunk, too, with them, and I blackguarded you poor children for all I was worth. I abused you, and com-

plained that you had abandoned me. I wanted, you see, to touch the drunken hussies' hearts, and pose as an unhappy father. It's my way, you know, when I want to screen my vices I throw all the blame on my innocent children. I can't tell lies and hide things from you, Borenka. I came to see you as proud as a peacock, but when I saw your gentleness and kind heart, my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, and it upset my conscience completely."

"Hush, father, let's talk of something else."

"Mother of God, what children I have," the old man went on, not heeding his son. "What wealth God has bestowed on me. Such children ought not to have had a black sheep like me for a father, but a real man with soul and feeling! I am not worthy of you!"

The old man took off his cap with a button at the top and crossed himself several times.

"Thanks be to Thee, O Lord!" he said with a sigh, looking from side to side as though seeking for an ikon. "Remarkable, exceptional children! I have three sons, and they are all like one. Sober, steady, hard-working, and what brains! Cabman, what brains! Grigory alone has brains enough for ten. He speaks French, he speaks German, and talks better than any of your lawyers—one is never tired of listening. My children, my children, I can't believe that you are mine! I can't believe it! You are a martyr, my Borenka, I am ruining you, and I shall go on ruining you. . . . You give to me endlessly, though you know your money is thrown away. The other day I sent you a pitiful letter, I described how ill I was, but you know I was lying, I wanted the money for rum. And you give to me because you are afraid to wound me by refusing. I know all that, and feel it. Grisha's a martyr, too. On Thursday I went to his office, drunk, filthy, ragged, reeking of vodka like a cellar . . . I went straight up, such a figure, I pestered him with nasty talk, while his colleagues and superiors and petitioners were standing round. I have disgraced him for life. And he wasn't the least confused, only turned a bit pale, but smiled and came up to me

as though there were nothing the matter, even introduced me to his colleagues. Then he took me all the way home, and not a word of reproach. I rob him worse than you. Take your brother Sasha now, he's a martyr too! He married, as you know, a colonel's daughter of an aristocratic circle, and got a dowry with her . . . . You would think he would have nothing to do with me. No, brother, after his wedding he came with his young wife and paid me the first visit . . . in my hole. . . . Upon my soul!"

The old man gave a sob and then began laughing.

"And at that moment, as luck would have it, we were eating grated radish with kvass and frying fish, and there was a stink enough in the flat to make the devil sick. I was lying down—I'd had a drop—my virago bounced out at the young people with her face crimson. . . . It was a disgrace in fact. But Sasha rose superior to it all."

"Yes, our Sasha is a good fellow," said Boris.

"The most splendid fellow! You are all pure gold, you and Grisha and Sasha and Sonya. I worry you, torment you, disgrace you, rob you, and all my life I have not heard one word of reproach from you, you have never given me one cross look. It would be all very well if I had been a decent father to you—but as it is! You have had nothing from me but harm. I am a bad, dissipated man. . . . Now, thank God, I am quieter and I have no strength of will, but in old days when you were little I had determination, will. Whatever I said or did I always thought it was right. Sometimes I'd come home from the club at night, drunk and ill-humoured, and scold at your poor mother for spending money. The whole night I would be railing at her, and think it the right thing too; you would get up in the morning and go to school, while I'd still be venting my temper upon her. Heavens! I did torture her, poor martyr! When you came back from school and I was asleep you didn't dare to have dinner till I got up. At dinner again there would be a flare up. I daresay you remember. I wish no one such a father; God sent me to you for a trial. Yes, for a trial! Hold out,

children, to the end! Honour thy father and thy days shall be long. Perhaps for your noble conduct God will grant you long life. Cabman, stop!"

The old man jumped out of the cab and ran into a tavern. Half an hour later he came back, cleared his throat in a drunken way, and sat down beside his son.

"Where's Sonya now?" he said. "Still at boarding-school?"

"No, she left in May, and is living now with Sasha's mother-in-law."

"There!" said the old man in surprise. "She is a jolly good girl! So she is following her brother's example. . . . Ah, Borenka, she has no mother, no one to rejoice over her! I say, Borenka, does she . . . does she know how I am living? Eh?"

Boris made no answer. Five minutes passed in profound silence. The old man gave a sob, wiped his face with a rag and said:

"I love her, Borenka! She is my only daughter, you know, and in one's old age there is no comfort like a daughter. Could I see her, Borenka?"

"Of course, when you like."

"Really? And she won't mind?"

"Of course not, she has been trying to find you so as to see you."

"Upon my soul! What children! Cabman, eh? Arrange it, Borenka darling! She is a young lady now, *delicatesse, consommé,* and all the rest of it in a refined way, and I don't want to show myself to her in such an abject state. I'll tell you how we'll contrive to work it. For three days I will keep away from spirits, to get my filthy, drunken phiz into better order. Then I'll come to you, and you shall lend me for the time some suit of yours; I'll shave and have my hair cut, then you go and bring her to your flat. Will you?"

"Very well."

"Cabman, stop!"

The old man sprang out of the cab again and ran into a

tavern. While Boris was driving with him to his lodging he jumped out twice again, while his son sat silent and waited patiently for him. When, after dismissing the cab, they made their way across a long, filthy yard to the "virago's" lodging, the old man put on an utterly shamefaced and guilty air, and began timidly clearing his throat and clicking with his lips.

"Borenka," he said in an ingratiating voice, "if my virago begins saying anything, don't take any notice . . . and behave to her, you know, affably. She is ignorant and impudent, but she's a good baggage. There is a good, warm heart beating in her bosom!"

The long yard ended, and Boris found himself in a dark entry. The swing door creaked, there was a smell of cooking and a smoking samovar. There was a sound of harsh voices. Passing through the passage into the kitchen Boris could see nothing but thick smoke, a line with washing on it, and the chimney of the samovar through a crack of which golden sparks were dropping.

"And here is my cell," said the old man, stooping down and going into a little room with a low-pitched ceiling, and an atmosphere unbearably stifling from the proximity of the kitchen.

Here three women were sitting at the table regaling themselves. Seeing the visitors, they exchanged glances and left off eating.

"Well, did you get it?" one of them, apparently the "virago" herself, asked abruptly.

"Yes, yes," muttered the old man. "Well, Boris, pray sit down. Everything is plain here, young man . . . we live in a simple way."

He bustled about in an aimless way. He felt ashamed before his son, and at the same time apparently he wanted to keep up before the women his dignity as cock of the walk, and as a forsaken, unhappy father.

"Yes, young man, we live simply with no nonsense," he

went on muttering. "We are simple people, young man. . . . We are not like you, we don't want to keep up a show before people. No! . . . Shall we have a drink of vodka?"

One of the women (she was ashamed to drink before a stranger) heaved a sigh and said:

"Well, I'll have another drink on account of the mushrooms. . . . They are such mushrooms, they make you drink even if you don't want to. Ivan Gerasimitch, offer the young gentleman, perhaps he will have a drink!"

The last word she pronounced in a mincing drawl.

"Have a drink, young man!" said the father, not looking at his son. "We have no wine or liqueurs, my boy, we live in a plain way."

"He doesn't like our ways," sighed the "virago."

"Never mind, never mind, he'll have a drink."

Not to offend his father by refusing, Boris took a wineglass and drank in silence. When they brought in the samovar, to satisfy the old man, he drank two cups of disgusting tea in silence, with a melancholy face. Without a word he listened to the virago dropping hints about there being in this world, cruel, heartless children who abandon their parents.

"I know what you are thinking now!" said the old man, after drinking more and passing into his habitual state of drunken excitement. "You think I have let myself sink into the mire, that I am to be pitied, but to my thinking, this simple life is much more normal than your life. . . . I don't need anybody, and . . . and I don't intend to eat humble pie. . . . I can't endure a wretched boy's looking at me with compassion."

After tea he cleaned a herring and sprinkled it with onion, with such feeling, that tears of emotion stood in his eyes. He began talking again about the races and his winnings, about some Panama hat for which he had paid sixteen roubles the day before. He told lies with the same relish with which he ate herring and drank. His son sat on in silence for an hour, and began to say good-bye.

"I don't venture to keep you," the old man said, haughtily. "You must excuse me, young man, for not living as you would like!"

He ruffled up his feathers, snorted with dignity, and winked at the women.

"Good-bye, young man," he said, seeing his son into the entry. *"Attendez."*

In the entry, where it was dark, he suddenly pressed his face against the young man's sleeve and gave a sob.

"I should like to have a look at Sonitchka," he whispered. "Arrange it, Borenka, my angel. I'll shave, I'll put on your suit . . . I'll put on a straight face . . . I'll hold my tongue while she is there. Yes, yes, I will told my tongue!"

He looked round timidly towards the door, through which the women's voices were heard, checked his sobs, and said aloud:

"Good-bye, young man! *Attendez."*

A PROBLEM

THE strictest measures were taken that the Uskovs' family secret might not leak out and become generally known. Half of the servants were sent off to the theatre or the circus; the other half were sitting in the kitchen and not allowed to leave it. Orders were given that no one was to be admitted. The wife of the Colonel, her sister, and the governess, though they had been initiated into the secret, kept up a pretence of knowing nothing; they sat in the dining-room and did not show themselves in the drawing-room or the hall.

Sasha Uskov, the young man of twenty-five who was the cause of all the commotion, had arrived some time before, and by the advice of kind-hearted Ivan Markovitch, his uncle, who was taking his part, he sat meekly in the hall by the door leading to the study, and prepared himself to make an open, candid explanation.

The other side of the door, in the study, a family council was being held. The subject under discussion was an exceedingly disagreeable and delicate one. Sasha Uskov had cashed at one of the banks a false promissory note, and it had become due for payment three days before, and now his two paternal uncles and Ivan Markovitch, the brother of his dead mother, were deciding the question whether they should pay the money and save the family honour, or wash their hands of it and leave the case to go for trial.

To outsiders who have no personal interest in the matter such questions seem simple; for those who are so unfortunate as to have to decide them in earnest they are extremely difficult. The uncles had been talking for a long time, but the problem seemed no nearer decision.

"My friends!" said the uncle who was a colonel, and there was a note of exhaustion and bitterness in his voice. "Who says that family honour is a mere convention? I don't say that at all. I am only warning you against a false view; I am pointing out the possibility of an unpardonable mistake. How can you fail to see it? I am not speaking Chinese; I am speaking Russian!"

"My dear fellow, we do understand," Ivan Markovitch protested mildly.

"How can you understand if you say that I don't believe in family honour? I repeat once more: fa-mil-y ho-nour falsely un-der-stood is a prejudice! Falsely understood! That's what I say: whatever may be the motives for screening a scoundrel, whoever he may be, and helping him to escape punishment, it is contrary to law and unworthy of a gentleman. It's not saving the family honour; it's civic cowardice! Take the army, for instance. . . . The honour of the army is more precious to us than any other honour, yet we don't screen our guilty members, but condemn them. And does the honour of the army suffer in consequence? Quite the opposite!"

The other paternal uncle, an official in the Treasury, a taciturn, dull-witted, and rheumatic man, sat silent, or spoke only of the fact that the Uskovs' name would get into the newspapers if the case went for trial. His opinion was that the case ought to be hushed up from the first and not become public property; but, apart from publicity in the newspapers, he advanced no other argument in support of this opinion.

The maternal uncle, kind-hearted Ivan Markovitch, spoke smoothly, softly, and with a tremor in his voice. He began with saying that youth has its rights and its peculiar temptations. Which of us has not been young, and who has not been led astray? To say nothing of ordinary mortals, even great men have not escaped errors and mistakes in their youth. Take, for instance, the biography of great writers. Did not every one of them gamble, drink, and draw upon himself the anger of right-thinking people in his young days? If Sasha's error bordered upon crime, they must remember that Sasha had

received practically no education; he had been expelled from the high school in the fifth class; he had lost his parents in early childhood, and so had been left at the tenderest age without guidance and good, benevolent influences. He was nervous, excitable, had no firm ground under his feet, and, above all, he had been unlucky. Even if he were guilty, anyway he deserved indulgence and the sympathy of all compassionate souls. He ought, of course, to be punished, but he was punished as it was by his conscience and the agonies he was enduring now while awaiting the sentence of his relations. The comparison with the army made by the Colonel was delightful, and did credit to his lofty intelligence; his appeal to their feeling of public duty spoke for the chivalry of his soul, but they must not forget that in each individual the citizen is closely linked with the Christian. . . .

"Shall we be false to civic duty," Ivan Markovitch exclaimed passionately, "if instead of punishing an erring boy we hold out to him a helping hand?"

Ivan Markovitch talked further of family honour. He had not the honour to belong to the Uskov family himself, but he knew their distinguished family went back to the thirteenth century; he did not forget for a minute, either, that his precious, beloved sister had been the wife of one of the representatives of that name. In short, the family was dear to him for many reasons, and he refused to admit the idea that, for the sake of a paltry fifteen hundred roubles, a blot should be cast on the escutcheon that was beyond all price. If all the motives he had brought forward were not sufficiently convincing, he, Ivan Markovitch, in conclusion, begged his listeners to ask themselves what was meant by crime? Crime is an immoral act founded upon ill-will. But is the will of man free? Philosophy has not yet given a positive answer to that question. Different views were held by the learned. The latest school of Lombroso, for instance, denies the freedom of the will, and considers every crime as the product of the purely anatomical peculiarities of the individual.

"Ivan Markovitch," said the Colonel, in a voice of entreaty,

"we are talking seriously about an important matter, and you bring in Lombroso, you clever fellow. Think a little, what are you saying all this for? Can you imagine that all your thunderings and rhetoric will furnish an answer to the question?"

Sasha Uskov sat at the door and listened. He felt neither terror, shame, nor depression, but only weariness and inward emptiness. It seemed to him that it made absolutely no difference to him whether they forgave him or not; he had come here to hear his sentence and to explain himself simply because kind-hearted Ivan Markovitch had begged him to do so. He was not afraid of the future. It made no difference to him where he was: here in the hall, in prison, or in Siberia.

"If Siberia, then let it be Siberia, damn it all!"

He was sick of life and found it insufferably hard. He was inextricably involved in debt; he had not a farthing in his pocket; his family had become detestable to him; he would have to part from his friends and his women sooner or later, as they had begun to be too contemptuous of his sponging on them. The future looked black.

Sasha was indifferent, and was only disturbed by one circumstance; the other side of the door they were calling him a scoundrel and a criminal. Every minute he was on the point of jumping up, bursting into the study and shouting in answer to the detestable metallic voice of the Colonel:

"You are lying!"

"Criminal" is a dreadful word—that is what murderers, thieves, robbers are; in fact, wicked and morally hopeless people. And Sasha was very far from being all that. . . . It was true he owed a great deal and did not pay his debts. But debt is not a crime, and it is unusual for a man not to be in debt. The Colonel and Ivan Markovitch were both in debt. . . .

"What have I done wrong besides?" Sasha wondered.

He had discounted a forged note. But all the young men he knew did the same. Handrikov and Von Burst always forged IOU's from their parents or friends when their allowances were not paid at the regular time, and then when they

got their money from home they redeemed them before they became due. Sasha had done the same, but had not redeemed the IOU because he had not got the money which Handrikov had promised to lend him. He was not to blame; it was the fault of circumstances. It was true that the use of another person's signature was considered reprehensible; but, still, it was not a crime but a generally accepted dodge, an ugly formality which injured no one and was quite harmless, for in forging the Colonel's signature Sasha had had no intention of causing anybody damage or loss.

"No, it doesn't mean that I am a criminal . . ." thought Sasha. "And it's not in my character to bring myself to commit a crime. I am soft, emotional. . . . When I have the money I help the poor. . . ."

Sasha was musing after this fashion while they went on talking the other side of the door.

"But, my friends, this is endless," the Colonel declared, getting excited. "Suppose we were to forgive him and pay the money. You know he would not give up leading a dissipated life, squandering money, making debts, going to our tailors and ordering suits in our names! Can you guarantee that this will be his last prank? As far as I am concerned, I have no faith whatever in his reforming!"

The official of the Treasury muttered something in reply; after him Ivan Markovitch began talking blandly and suavely again. The Colonel moved his chair impatiently and drowned the other's words with his detestable metallic voice. At last the door opened and Ivan Markovitch came out of the study; there were patches of red on his lean shaven face.

"Come along," he said, taking Sasha by the hand. "Come and speak frankly from your heart. Without pride, my dear boy, humbly and from your heart."

Sasha went into the study. The official of the Treasury was sitting down; the Colonel was standing before the table with one hand in his pocket and one knee on a chair. It was smoky and stifling in the study. Sasha did not look at the official or the Colonel; he felt suddenly ashamed and uncom-

fortable. He looked uneasily at Ivan Markovitch and muttered:

"I'll pay it . . . I'll give it back. . . ."

"What did you expect when you discounted the IOU?" he heard a metallic voice.

"I . . . Handrikov promised to lend me the money before now."

Sasha could say no more. He went out of the study and sat down again on the chair near the door. He would have been glad to go away altogether at once, but he was choking with hatred and he awfully wanted to remain, to tear the Colonel to pieces, to say something rude to him. He sat trying to think of something violent and effective to say to his hated uncle, and at that moment a woman's figure, shrouded in the twilight, appeared at the drawing-room door. It was the Colonel's wife. She beckoned Sasha to her, and, wringing her hands, said, weeping:

"*Alexandre,* I know you don't like me, but . . . listen to me; listen, I beg you. . . . But, my dear, how can this have happened? Why, it's awful, awful! For goodness' sake, beg them, defend yourself, entreat them."

Sasha looked at her quivering shoulders, at the big tears that were rolling down her cheeks, heard behind his back the hollow, nervous voices of worried and exhausted people, and shrugged his shoulders. He had not in the least expected that his aristocratic relations would raise such a tempest over a paltry fifteen hundred roubles! He could not understand her tears nor the quiver of their voices.

An hour later he heard that the Colonel was getting the best of it; the uncles were finally inclining to let the case go to trial.

"The matter's settled," said the Colonel, sighing. "Enough."

After this decision all the uncles, even the emphatic Colonel, became noticeably depressed. A silence followed.

"Merciful Heavens!" sighed Ivan Markovitch. "My poor sister!"

And he began saying in a subdued voice that most likely his

sister, Sasha's mother, was present unseen in the study at that moment. He felt in his soul how the unhappy, saintly woman was weeping, grieving, and begging for her boy. For the sake of her peace beyond the grave, they ought to spare Sasha.

The sound of a muffled sob was heard. Ivan Markovitch was weeping and muttering something which it was impossible to catch through the door. The Colonel got up and paced from corner to corner. The long conversation began over again.

But then the clock in the drawing-room struck two. The family council was over. To avoid seeing the person who had moved him to such wrath, the Colonel went from the study, not into the hall, but into the vestibule. . . . Ivan Markovitch came out into the hall. . . . He was agitated and rubbing his hands joyfully. His tear-stained eyes looked good-humoured and his mouth was twisted into a smile.

"Capital," he said to Sasha. "Thank God! You can go home, my dear, and sleep tranquilly. We have decided to pay the sum, but on condition that you repent and come with me tomorrow into the country and set to work."

A minute later Ivan Markovitch and Sasha in their great-coats and caps were going down the stairs. The uncle was muttering something edifying. Sasha did not listen, but felt as though some uneasy weight were gradually slipping off his shoulders. They had forgiven him; he was free! A gust of joy sprang up within him and sent a sweet chill to his heart. He longed to breathe, to move swiftly, to live! Glancing at the street lamps and the black sky, he remembered that Von Burst was celebrating his name-day that evening at the "Bear," and again a rush of joy flooded his soul. . . .

"I am going!" he decided.

But then he remembered he had not a farthing, that the companions he was going to would despise him at once for his empty pockets. He must get hold of some money, come what may!

"Uncle, lend me a hundred roubles," he said to Ivan Markovitch.

His uncle, surprised, looked into his face and backed against a lamp-post.

"Give it to me," said Sasha, shifting impatiently from one foot to the other and beginning to pant. "Uncle, I entreat you, give me a hundred roubles."

His face worked; he trembled, and seemed on the point of attacking his uncle. . . .

"Won't you?" he kept asking, seeing his uncle was still amazed and did not understand. "Listen. If you don't, I'll give myself up tomorrow! I won't let you pay the IOU! I'll present another false note tomorrow!"

Petrified, muttering something incoherent in his horror, Ivan Markovitch took a hundred-rouble note out of his pocket-book and gave it to Sasha. The young man took it and walked rapidly away from him. . . .

Taking a sledge, Sasha grew calmer, and felt a rush of joy within him again. The "rights of youth" of which kind-hearted Ivan Markovitch had spoken at the family council woke up and asserted themselves. Sasha pictured the drinking-party before him, and, among the bottles, the women, and his friends, the thought flashed through his mind:

"Now I see that I am a criminal; yes, I am a criminal."

THE MAN IN A CASE

At the furthest end of the village of Mironositskoe some belated sportsmen lodged for the night in the elder Prokofy's barn. There were two of them, the veterinary surgeon Ivan Ivanovitch and the schoolmaster Burkin. Ivan Ivanovitch had a rather strange double-barrelled surname—Tchimsha-Himalaisky—which did not suit him at all, and he was called simply Ivan Ivanovitch all over the province. He lived at a stud-farm near the town, and had come out shooting now to get a breath of fresh air. Burkin, the high-school teacher, stayed every summer at Count P——'s, and had been thoroughly at home in this district for years.

They did not sleep. Ivan Ivanovitch, a tall, lean old fellow with long moustaches, was sitting outside the door, smoking a pipe in the moonlight. Burkin was lying within on the hay, and could not be seen in the darkness.

They were telling each other all sorts of stories. Among other things, they spoke of the fact that the elder's wife, Mavra, a healthy and by no means stupid woman, had never been beyond her native village, had never seen a town nor a railway in her life, and had spent the last ten years sitting behind the stove, and only at night going out into the street.

"What is there wonderful in that!" said Burkin. "There are plenty of people in the world, solitary by temperament, who try to retreat into their shell like a hermit crab or a snail. Perhaps it is an instance of atavism, a return to the period when the ancestor of man was not yet a social animal and lived alone in his den, or perhaps it is only one of the diversities of human character—who knows? I am not a natural science man, and it is not my business to settle such questions; I only mean to say that people like Mavra are not

uncommon. There is no need to look far; two months ago a man called Byelikov, a colleague of mine, the Greek master, died in our town. You have heard of him, no doubt. He was remarkable for always wearing goloshes and a warm wadded coat, and carrying an umbrella even in the very finest weather. And his umbrella was in a case, and his watch was in a case made of grey chamois leather, and when he took out his penknife to sharpen his pencil, his penknife, too, was in a little case; and his face seemed to be in a case too, because he always hid it in his turned-up collar. He wore dark spectacles and flannel vests, stuffed up his ears with cotton-wool, and when he got into a cab always told the driver to put up the hood. In short, the man displayed a constant and insurmountable impulse to wrap himself in a covering, to make himself, so to speak, a case which would isolate him and protect him from external influences. Reality irritated him, frightened him, kept him in continual agitation, and, perhaps to justify his timidity, his aversion for the actual, he always praised the past and what had never existed; and even the classical languages which he taught were in reality for him goloshes and umbrellas in which he sheltered himself from real life.

" 'Oh, how sonorous, how beautiful is the Greek language!' he would say, with a sugary expression; and as though to prove his words he would screw up his eyes and, raising his finger, would pronounce 'Anthropos!'

"And Byelikov tried to hide his thoughts also in a case. The only things that were clear to his mind were government circulars and newspaper articles in which something was forbidden. When some proclamation prohibited the boys from going out in the streets after nine o'clock in the evening, or some article declared carnal love unlawful, it was to his mind clear and definite; it was forbidden, and that was enough. For him there was always a doubtful element, something vague and not fully expressed, in any sanction or permission. When a dramatic club or a reading-room or a tea-shop was licensed in the town, he would shake his head and say softly:

" 'It is all right, of course; it is all very nice, but I hope it won't lead to anything!'

"Every sort of breach of order, deviation or departure from rule, depressed him, though one would have thought it was no business of his. If one of his colleagues was late for church or if rumours reached him of some prank of the high-school boys, or one of the mistresses was seen late in the evening in the company of an officer, he was much disturbed, and said he hoped that nothing would come of it. At the teachers' meetings he simply oppressed us with his caution, his circumspection, and his characteristic reflection on the ill-behaviour of the young people in both male and female high-schools, the uproar in the classes. . . .

"Oh, he hoped it would not reach the ears of the authorities; oh, he hoped nothing would come of it; and he thought it would be a very good thing if Petrov were expelled from the second class and Yegorov from the fourth. And, do you know, by his sighs, his despondency, his black spectacles on his pale little face, a little face like a pole-cat's, you know, he crushed us all, and we gave way, reduced Petrov's and Yegorov's marks for conduct, kept them in, and in the end expelled them both. He had a strange habit of visiting our lodgings. He would come to a teacher's, would sit down, and remain silent, as though he were carefully inspecting something. He would sit like this in silence for an hour or two and then go away. This he called 'maintaining good relations with his colleagues'; and it was obvious that coming to see us and sitting there was tiresome to him, and that he came to see us simply because he considered it his duty as our colleague. We teachers were afraid of him. And even the headmaster was afraid of him. Would you believe it, our teachers were all intellectual, right-minded people, brought up on Turgenev and Shtchedrin, yet this little chap, who always went about with goloshes and an umbrella, had the whole high-school under his thumb for fifteen long years! High-school, indeed—he had the whole town under his thumb! Our ladies did not get up private theatricals on Saturdays for fear he

should hear of it, and the clergy dared not eat meat or play cards in his presence. Under the influence of people like Byelikov we have got into the way of being afraid of everything in our town for the last ten or fifteen years. They are afraid to speak aloud, afraid to send letters, afraid to make acquaintances, afraid to read books, afraid to help the poor, to teach people to read and write. . . ."

Ivan Ivanovitch cleared his throat, meaning to say something, but first lighted his pipe, gazed at the moon, and then said, with pauses:

"Yes, intellectual, right-minded people read Shtchedrin and Turgenev, Buckle, and all the rest of them, yet they knocked under and put up with it . . . that's just how it is."

"Byelikov lived in the same house as I did," Burkin went on, "on the same storey, his door facing mine; we often saw each other, and I knew how he lived when he was at home. And at home it was the same story: dressing-gown, nightcap, blinds, bolts, a perfect succession of prohibitions and restrictions of all sorts, and—'Oh, I hope nothing will come of it!' Lenten fare was bad for him, yet he could not eat meat, as people might perhaps say Byelikov did not keep the fasts, and he ate fresh-water fish with butter—not a Lenten dish, yet one could not say that it was meat. He did not keep a female servant for fear people might think evil of him, but had as cook an old man of sixty, called Afanasy, half-witted and given to tippling, who had once been an officer's servant and could cook after a fashion. This Afanasy was usually standing at the door with his arms folded; with a deep sigh, he would mutter always the same thing:

"'There are plenty of *them* about nowadays!'

"Byelikov had a little bedroom like a box; his bed had curtains. When he went to bed he covered his head over; it was hot and stuffy; the wind battered on the closed doors; there was a droning noise in the stove and a sound of sighs from the kitchen—ominous sighs. . . . And he felt frightened under the bed-clothes. He was afraid that something might happen, that Afanasy might murder him, that thieves

might break in, and so he had troubled dreams all night, and in the morning, when we went together to the high-school, he was depressed and pale, and it was evident that the high-school full of people excited dread and aversion in his whole being, and that to walk beside me was irksome to a man of his solitary temperament.

" 'They make a great noise in our classes,' he used to say, as though trying to find an explanation for his depression. 'It's beyond anything.'

"And the Greek master, this man in a case—would you believe it?—almost got married."

Ivan Ivanovitch glanced quickly into the barn, and said: "You are joking!"

"Yes, strange as it seems, he almost got married. A new teacher of history and geography, Mihail Savvitch Kovalenko, a Little Russian, was appointed. He came, not alone, but with his sister Varinka. He was a tall, dark young man with huge hands, and one could see from his face that he had a bass voice, and, in fact, he had a voice that seemed to come out of a barrel—'boom, boom, boom!' And she was not so young, about thirty, but she, too, was tall, well-made, with black eyebrows and red cheeks—in fact, she was a regular sugar-plum, and so sprightly, so noisy; she was always singing Little Russian songs and laughing. For the least thing she would go off into a ringing laugh—'Ha-ha-ha!' We made our first thorough acquaintance with the Kovalenkos at the head-master's name-day party. Among the glum and intensely bored teachers who came even to the name-day party as a duty we suddenly saw a new Aphrodite risen from the waves; she walked with her arms akimbo, laughed, sang, danced. . . . She sang with feeling 'The Winds do Blow,' then another song, and another, and she fascinated us all—all, even Byelikov. He sat down by her and said with a honeyed smile:

" 'The Little Russian reminds one of the ancient Greek in its softness and agreeable resonance.'

"That flattered her, and she began telling him with feeling and earnestness that they had a farm in the Gadyatchsky dis-

trict, and that her mamma lived at the farm, and that they had such pears, such melons, such *kabaks!* The Little Russians call pumpkins *kabaks* (*i.e.,* pothouses), while their pothouses they call *shinki,* and they make a beetroot soup with tomatoes and aubergines in it, 'which was so nice—awfully nice!'

"We listened and listened, and suddenly the same idea dawned upon us all:

" 'It would be a good thing to make a match of it,' the headmaster's wife said to me softly.

"We all for some reason recalled the fact that our friend Byelikov was not married, and it now seemed to us strange that we had hitherto failed to observe, and had in fact completely lost sight of, a detail so important in his life. What was his attitude to woman? How had he settled this vital question for himself? This had not interested us in the least till then; perhaps we had not even admitted the idea that a man who went out in all weathers in goloshes and slept under curtains could be in love.

" 'He is a good deal over forty and she is thirty,' the headmaster's wife went on, developing her idea. 'I believe she would marry him.'

"All sorts of things are done in the provinces through boredom, all sorts of unnecessary and nonsensical things! And that is because what is necessary is not done at all. What need was there, for instance, for us to make a match for this Byelikov, whom one could not even imagine married? The headmaster's wife, the inspector's wife, and all our high-school ladies, grew livelier and even better-looking, as though they had suddenly found a new object in life. The headmaster's wife would take a box at the theatre, and we beheld sitting in her box Varinka, with such a fan, beaming and happy, and beside her Byelikov, a little bent figure, looking as though he had been extracted from his house by pincers. I would give an evening party, and the ladies would insist on my inviting Byelikov and Varinka. In short, the machine was set in motion. It appeared that Varinka was not averse to matrimony. She had not a very cheerful life with her brother; they could do

nothing but quarrel and scold one another from morning till night. Here is a scene, for instance. Kovalenko would be coming along the street, a tall, sturdy young ruffian, in an embroidered shirt, his love-locks falling on his forehead under his cap, in one hand a bundle of books, in the other a thick knotted stick, followed by his sister, also with books in her hand.

" 'But you haven't read it, Mihalik!' she would be arguing loudly. 'I tell you, I swear you have not read it at all!'

" 'And I tell you I have read it," cries Kovalenko, thumping his stick on the pavement.

" 'Oh, my goodness, Mihalik! why are you so cross? We are arguing about principles.'

" 'I tell you that I have read it!' Kovalenko would shout, more loudly than ever.

"And at home, if there was an outsider present, there was sure to be a skirmish. Such a life must have been wearisome, and of course she must have longed for a home of her own. Besides, there was her age to be considered; there was no time left to pick and choose; it was a case of marrying anybody, even a Greek master. And, indeed, most of our young ladies don't mind whom they marry so long as they do get married. However that may be, Varinka began to show an unmistakable partiality for Byelikov.

"And Byelikov? He used to visit Kovalenko just as he did us. He would arrive, sit down, and remain silent. He would sit quiet, and Varinka would sing to him 'The Winds do Blow,' or would look pensively at him with her dark eyes, or would suddenly go off into a peal—'Ha-ha-ha!'

"Suggestion plays a great part in love affairs, and still more in getting married. Everybody—both his colleagues and the ladies—began assuring Byelikov that he ought to get married, that there was nothing left for him in life but to get married; we all congratulated him, with solemn countenances delivered ourselves of various platitudes, such as 'Marriage is a serious step.' Besides, Varinka was good-looking and interesting; she was the daughter of a civil councillor, and had a farm;

and what was more, she was the first woman who had been warm and friendly in her manner to him. His head was turned, and he decided that he really ought to get married."

"Well, at that point you ought to have taken away his goloshes and umbrella," said Ivan Ivanovitch.

"Only fancy! that turned out to be impossible. He put Varinka's portrait on his table, kept coming to see me and talking about Varinka, and home life, saying marriage was a serious step. He was frequently at Kovalenko's but he did not alter his manner of life in the least; on the contrary, indeed, his determination to get married seemed to have a depressing effect on him. He grew thinner and paler, and seemed to retreat further and further into his case.

" 'I like Varvara Savvishna,' he used to say to me, with a faint and wry smile, 'and I know that every one ought to get married, but . . . you know all this has happened so suddenly. . . . One must think a little.'

" 'What is there to think over?' I used to say to him. 'Get married—that is all.'

" 'No; marriage is a serious step. One must first weigh the duties before one, the responsibilities . . . that nothing may go wrong afterwards. It worries me so much that I don't sleep at night. And I must confess I am afraid: her brother and she have a strange way of thinking; they look at things strangely, you know, and her disposition is very impetuous. One may get married, and then, there is no knowing, one may find oneself in an unpleasant position.'

"And he did not make an offer; he kept putting it off, to the great vexation of the headmaster's wife and all our ladies; he went on weighing his future duties and responsibilities, and meanwhile he went for a walk with Varinka almost every day—possibly he thought that this was necessary in his position—and came to see me to talk about family life. And in all probability in the end he would have proposed to her, and would have made one of those unnecessary, stupid marriages such as are made by thousands among us from being bored and having nothing to do, if it had not been for a *kolossalische*

scandal. I must mention that Varinka's brother, Kovalenko, detested Byelikov from the first day of their acquaintance, and could not endure him.

"'I don't understand,' he used to say to us, shrugging his shoulders—'I don't understand how you can put up with that sneak, that nasty phiz. Ugh! how can you live here! The atmosphere is stifling and unclean! Do you call yourselves schoolmasters, teachers? You are paltry government clerks. You keep, not a temple of science, but a department for red tape and loyal behaviour, and it smells as sour as a police-station. No, my friends; I will stay with you for a while, and then I will go to my farm and there catch crabs and teach the Little Russians. I shall go, and you can stay here with your Judas—damn his soul!'

"Or he would laugh till he cried, first in a loud bass, then in a shrill, thin laugh, and ask me, waving his hands:

"'What does he sit here for? What does he want? He sits and stares.'

"He even gave Byelikov a nickname, 'The Spider.' And it will readily be understood that we avoided talking to him of his sister's being about to marry 'The Spider.'

"And on one occasion, when the headmaster's wife hinted to him what a good thing it would be to secure his sister's future with such a reliable, universally respected man as Byelikov, he frowned and muttered:

"'It's not my business; let her marry a reptile if she likes. I don't like meddling in other people's affairs.'

"Now hear what happened next. Some mischievous person drew a caricature of Byelikov walking along in his goloshes with his trousers tucked up, under his umbrella, with Varinka on his arm; below, the inscription 'Anthropos in love.' The expression was caught to a marvel, you know. The artist must have worked for more than one night, for the teachers of both the boys' and girls' high-schools, the teachers of the seminary, the government officials, all received a copy. Byelikov received one, too. The caricature made a very painful impression on him.

"We went out together; it was the first of May, a Sunday, and all of us, the boys and the teachers, had agreed to meet at the high-school and then to go for a walk together to a wood beyond the town. We set off, and he was green in the face and gloomier than a storm-cloud.

" 'What wicked, ill-natured people there are!' he said, and his lips quivered.

"I felt really sorry for him. We were walking along, and all of a sudden—would you believe it?—Kovalenko came bowling along on a bicycle, and after him, also on a bicycle, Varinka, flushed and exhausted, but good-humoured and gay.

" 'We are going on ahead,' she called. 'What lovely weather! Awfully lovely!'

"And they both disappeared from our sight. Byelikov turned white instead of green, and seemed petrified. He stopped short and stared at me. . . .

" 'What is the meaning of it? Tell me, please!' he asked. 'Can my eyes have deceived me? Is it the proper thing for high-school masters and ladies to ride bicycles?'

" 'What is there improper about it?' I said. 'Let them ride and enjoy themselves.'

" 'But how can that be?' he cried, amazed at my calm. 'What are you saying?'

"And he was so shocked that he was unwilling to go on, and returned home.

"Next day he was continually twitching and nervously rubbing his hands, and it was evident from his face that he was unwell. And he left before his work was over, for the first time in his life. And he ate no dinner. Towards evening he wrapped himself up warmly, though it was quite warm weather, and sallied out to the Kovalenkos'. Varinka was out; he found her brother, however.

" 'Pray sit down,' Kovalenko said coldly, with a frown. His face looked sleepy; he had just had a nap after dinner, and was in a very bad humour.

"Byelikov sat in silence for ten minutes, and then began:

" 'I have come to see you to relieve my mind. I am very,

very much troubled. Some scurrilous fellow has drawn an absurd caricature of me and another person, in whom we are both deeply interested. I regard it as a duty to assure you that I have had no hand in it. . . . I have given no sort of ground for such ridicule—on the contrary, I have always behaved in every way like a gentleman.'

"Kovalenko sat sulky and silent. Byelikov waited a little, and went on slowly in a mournful voice:

" 'And I have something else to say to you. I have been in the service for years, while you have only lately entered it, and I consider it my duty as an older colleague to give you a warning. You ride on a bicycle, and that pastime is utterly unsuitable for an educator of youth.'

" 'Why so?' asked Kovalenko in his bass.

" 'Surely that needs no explanation, Mihail Savvitch—surely you can understand that? If the teacher rides a bicycle, what can you expect the pupils to do? You will have them walking on their heads next! And so long as there is no formal permission to do so, it is out of the question. I was horrified yesterday! When I saw your sister everything seemed dancing before my eyes. A lady or a young girl on a bicycle —it's awful!'

" 'What is it you want exactly?'

" 'All I want is to warn you, Mihail Savvitch. You are a young man, you have a future before you, you must be very, very careful in your behaviour, and you are so careless—oh, so careless! You go about in an embroidered shirt, are constantly seen in the street carrying books, and now the bicycle, too. The headmaster will learn that you and your sister ride the bicycle, and then it will reach the higher authorities. . . . Will that be a good thing?'

" 'It's no business of anybody else if my sister and I do bicycle!' said Kovalenko, and he turned crimson. 'And damnation take any one who meddles in my private affairs!'

"Byelikov turned pale and got up.

" 'If you speak to me in that tone I cannot continue,' he said. 'And I beg you never to express yourself like that about our

superiors in my presence; you ought to be respectful to the authorities.'

"'Why, have I said any harm of the authorities?' asked Kovalenko, looking at him wrathfully. 'Please leave me alone. I am an honest man, and do not care to talk to a gentleman like you. I don't like sneaks!'

"Byelikov flew into a nervous flutter, and began hurriedly putting on his coat, with an expression of horror on his face. It was the first time in his life he had been spoken to so rudely.

"'You can say what you please,' he said, as he went out from the entry to the landing on the staircase. 'I ought only to warn you: possibly some one may have overheard us, and that our conversation may not be misunderstood and harm come of it, I shall be compelled to inform our headmaster of our conversation . . . in its main features. I am bound to do so.'

"'Inform him? You can go and make your report!'

"Kovalenko seized him from behind by the collar and gave him a push, and Byelikov rolled downstairs, thudding with his goloshes. The staircase was high and steep, but he rolled to the bottom unhurt, got up, and touched his nose to see whether his spectacles were all right. But just as he was falling down the stairs Varinka came in, and with her two ladies; they stood below staring, and to Byelikov this was more terrible than anything. I believe he would rather have broken his neck or both legs than have been an object of ridicule. Why, now the whole town would hear of it; it would come to the headmaster's ears, would reach the higher authorities—oh, it might lead to something! There would be another caricature, and it would all end in his being asked to resign his post. . . .

"When he got up, Varinka recognized him, and, looking at his ridiculous face, his crumpled overcoat, and his goloshes, not understanding what had happened and supposing that he had slipped down by accident, could not restrain herself, and laughed loud enough to be heard by all the flats:

"'Ha-ha-ha!'

"And this pealing, ringing 'Ha-ha-ha!' was the last straw

that put an end to everything: to the proposed match and to Byelikov's earthly existence. He did not hear what Varinka said to him; he saw nothing. On reaching home, the first thing he did was to remove her portrait from the table; then he went to bed, and he never got up again.

"Three days later Afanasy came to me and asked whether we should not send for the doctor, as there was something wrong with his master. I went in to Byelikov. He lay silent behind the curtain, covered with a quilt; if one asked him a question, he said 'Yes' or 'No' and not another sound. He lay there while Afanasy, gloomy and scowling, hovered about him, sighing heavily, and smelling like a pothouse.

"A month later Byelikov died. We all went to his funeral —that is, both the high-schools and the seminary. Now when he was lying in his coffin his expression was mild, agreeable, even cheerful, as though he were glad that he had at last been put into a case which he would never leave again. Yes, he had attained his ideal! And, as though in his honour, it was dull, rainy weather on the day of his funeral, and we all wore goloshes and took our umbrellas. Varinka, too, was at the funeral, and when the coffin was lowered into the grave she burst into tears. I have noticed that Little Russian women are always laughing or crying—no intermediate mood.

"One must confess that to bury people like Byelikov is a great pleasure. As we were returning from the cemetery we wore discreet Lenten faces; no one wanted to display this feeling of pleasure—a feeling like that we had experienced long, long ago as children when our elders had gone out and we ran about the garden for an hour or two, enjoying complete freedom. Ah, freedom, freedom! The merest hint, the faintest hope of its possibility gives wings to the soul, does it not?

"We returned from the cemetery in good humour. But not more than a week had passed before life went on as in the past, as gloomy, oppressive, and senseless—a life not forbidden by government prohibition, but not fully permitted, either: it was no better. And, indeed, though we had buried

Byelikov, how many such men in cases were left, how many more of them will there be!"

"That's just how it is," said Ivan Ivanovitch, and he lighted his pipe.

"How many more of them there will be!" repeated Burkin.

The schoolmaster came out of the barn. He was a short, stout man, completely bald, with a black beard down to his waist. The two dogs came out with him.

"What a moon!" he said, looking upwards.

It was midnight. On the right could be seen the whole village, a long street stretching far away for four miles. All was buried in deep silent slumber; not a movement, not a sound; one could hardly believe that nature could be so still. When on a moonlight night you see a broad village street, with its cottages, haystacks, and slumbering willows, a feeling of calm comes over the soul; in this peace, wrapped away from care, toil, and sorrow in the darkness of night, it is mild, melancholy, beautiful, and it seems as though the stars look down upon it kindly and with tenderness, and as though there were no evil on earth and all were well. On the left the open country began from the end of the village; it could be seen stretching far away to the horizon, and there was no movement, no sound in that whole expanse bathed in moonlight.

"Yes, that is just how it is," repeated Ivan Ivanovitch; "and isn't our living in town, airless and crowded, our writing useless papers, our playing *vint*—isn't that all a sort of case for us? And our spending our whole lives among trivial, fussy men and silly, idle women, our talking and our listening to all sorts of nonsense—isn't that a case for us, too? If you like, I will tell you a very edifying story."

"No; it's time we were asleep," said Burkin.

"Tell it tomorrow."

They went into the barn and lay down on the hay. And they were both covered up and beginning to doze when they suddenly heard light footsteps—patter, patter. . . . Some one was walking not far from the barn, walking a little and

stopping, and a minute later, patter, patter again. . . .The dogs began growling.

"That's Mavra," said Burkin.

The footsteps died away.

"You see and hear that they lie," said Ivan Ivanovitch, turning over on the other side, "and they call you a fool for putting up with their lying. You endure insult and humiliation, and dare not openly say that you are on the side of the honest and the free, and you lie and smile yourself; and all that for the sake of a crust of bread, for the sake of a warm corner, for the sake of a wretched little worthless rank in the service. No, one can't go on living like this."

"Well, you are off on another tack now, Ivan Ivanovitch," said the schoolmaster. "Let us go to sleep!"

And ten minutes later Burkin was asleep. But Ivan Ivanovitch kept sighing and turning over from side to side; then he got up, went outside again, and, sitting in the doorway, lighted his pipe.

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